

NATIONAL REPORT, CYPRUS

'FLYING TEAM AGAINST VIOLENCE'

**COMBATING HONOUR RELATED
VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGES
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 **MEDITERRANEAN
INSTITUTE OF
GENDER STUDIES**

**Flying Team against Violence- Combating Honour
Related Violence and Forced Marriages**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE, GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Many women and men, boys and girls in Europe are, or are at risk of, becoming victims of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), honour related violence (HRV), forced marriage (FM), and abandonment. Such practices take place usually (but not exclusively) in migrant and refugee communities, such as the Turkish, Moroccan, Iraqi, Iranian, and Afghan communities. They can also take place in multicultural families where one partner is originally European and the other of migrant background.

This report is a result of a study conducted by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) within the framework of the project *Flying Team against Violence – Combating Honour Related Violence and Forced Marriages*, funded by the European Commission Daphne III Programme, and coordinated by the Social Development Organisation MOVISIE International (Netherlands).

The project's main aim is to enhance knowledge and to identify good practices on a grass roots level in relation to the prevention and combating of honour related violence (HRV), forced marriage (FM) and abandonment as forms of gender-based violence, as well as the creation of a European network of organisations and individuals working on these issues.

The aim of the research study is to map good practice implemented by grass root organizations and NGOs in relation to 'traditional harmful practices' in the partner countries, and identify those actions that can be used to successfully raise awareness and promote dialogue within communities. The publication of a final joint project report will describe the working process, the methods used, the results, the conclusions and recommendations of the project developed by the project team as a whole.

Among the project activities is also the development of a toolkit consisting of one good practice from each partner country which will be published together with selected recommendations and disseminated widely among grass roots organisations,

NGOs, as well as policy makers, and other relevant stakeholders on a national and European level. A 'Flying Team' will be formed that will consist of representatives of grass-roots organizations and NGOs from each participating country that will present the toolkit in national meetings and conduct workshops with representatives of NGOs, national authorities, and policy makers working on gender-based violence.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Methodological framework

A gender equality approach has been applied for the purposes of the current research study using qualitative research methods. In utilizing a gender equality perspective the focus is not on individual women and men but on the system which determines gender roles / responsibilities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making potentials. It is also important to emphasize here that the concept of gender used for the purposes of this study is not interchangeable with women but refers to both women and men, and the power relations between them.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through two semi-structured, in-depth focus groups targeting NGOs and grass root organisations dealing with HRV, FM and/or Abandonment in Cyprus. Due to the fact that organisations dealing specifically with these issues are nonexistent in Cyprus, the research study was carried out with the participation of organisations dealing with domestic violence, violence against women and children, asylum and migration. The focus groups were conducted with both Greek-Cypriot organisations and Turkish-Cypriot organisations to ensure that the views, perspectives and experiences of organisations from both communities are reflected in the study.¹ A total of eight grass root organisations participated in the focus groups. The working language of the focus groups was English, used as a common language for Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot NGO representatives. Additional small scale interviews with relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from the Office for Combating trafficking in Human Beings and the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office of the Cyprus Police, were conducted in Greek and then translated by the author. The basic structure of the focus group guide and the interview guide was developed by the project coordinator MOVISIE International (Netherlands) after consultation with the project partners. In order to comply with the Law on Personal Data of Cyprus all interviewees and focus group participants were asked to read and sign consent forms ensuring confidentiality.

1 Since 1974, the Republic of Cyprus is de facto partitioned into two main parts; the area under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish- Cypriot controlled area in the north.

Prior to the qualitative data collection and analysis, a literature review was also carried out. Secondary data was used where available and included both previous research conducted by MIGS as well as other organisations and research centres. Information was also gathered through existing laws and policy documents such as the National Action Plan on Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family (2010-2015), as well as police criminal statistics and statistics available from the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence. Media reports and articles addressing issues of violence against women were also used for the purposes of this study.

Data Analysis

The themes addressed in this research study include i) an analysis of the terms “honour related violence”, “forced marriage”, and “abandonment” within the Cyprus context, ii) an analysis of the political climate in Cyprus in relation to migrants and refugees, particularly as this relates to gender, iii) a general description of, and discussion on, national policy and legislation and their impact in combating HRV, FM, and abandonment, iv) an analysis of the existing approaches to combating HRV, FM and abandonment, and v) recommendations as well as examples of good practice in combating HRV, FM and abandonment.

Limitations

The absence of the only organisation in Cyprus working exclusively on the rights of migrants and anti-discrimination from the focus groups was a considerable limitation as their views could not be included in this report. However, this limitation was overcome by using secondary data and good practices published by the organisation. Furthermore, the fact that there are no Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot grass root organisations and NGOs specifically addressing HRV and FM, meant that the selection of good practices featured in Chapter 3 was carried out based on their relevance and transferability to the issues addressed within the framework of this project.

Definitions Used

According to the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action, the term “violence against women” means 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 private life” (United Nations 1996:73f).

Violence against women is a structural violation of women’s human rights and is recognized as such by international human rights instruments. General Recommendation No. 19 of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) states that “Gender-based violence against women is violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that af-

fects women disproportionately.” According to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which has been endorsed by all EU Member States, violence against women “is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women’s full advancement”.

Violence against women is rooted in a system of practices and laws which sanctioned men’s rights and active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women and regard them as their property (Maynard, 1989). Domestic violence as a form of violence against women, involves a male perpetrator and a female victim in the majority of reported violence, and constitutes a reflection of unequal power relationships between men and women (Maynard and Winn, 1997).

Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women and involves a pattern of abusive and threatening behaviours that may include physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence as well as intimidation, isolation and coercion. The purpose of domestic violence is to establish and exert power and control over another; and men most often use it against their intimate partners, such as current or former spouses, girlfriends, or dating partners (Stop Violence against Women, 2011). Intimate partner violence is an epidemic of global proportions that has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world.

In Cyprus, according to the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Laws, violence in the family “means any act, omission or behaviour which causes physical, sexual or mental injury to any member of the family by another member of the family and includes violence used for the purpose of having sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim as well as of restricting its freedom.”² Member of the family can mean a husband and wife who have been legally married whether the marriage still exists or not, or cohabiting partners; the parents of the cohabiting spouses; the children and/or grandchildren of cohabiting partners and their parents; or any person residing with the aforementioned persons. However, the defilement or attempted defilement of girls under the age of 16, are considered particularly serious and carry increased sentences. The Law also specifically recognizes children witness of violence as direct victims of said violence. Furthermore, marital rape is recognized in the law as a gender-specific offence by a husband toward his wife.

For the purpose of the current study the following definitions have been used:

‘Honour Related Violence’ (HRV) has been defined by the project team as “Any form of physical or mental violence, in the form of custody, mistreatment, isolation, humiliation, repudiation, murder or suicide, committed out of a collective mentality, in response to a (threat of) violation of the honour of a man or a woman, and therefore that of his or her

2 The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law 119(I) of 2000 and 212(I) of 2004

family, of which the outside world is aware of or may become aware of.” Honour related violence is a form of violence perpetrated predominantly by males against females within the framework of collective based family structures, communities and societies where the main claim for the perpetuation of violence is the protection of a societal construction of honour as a value system, norm or tradition.

‘Forced marriage’ (FM) is defined by the project team as “A marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress by means of social and/or physical and/or economic pressure or physical and/or mental abuse is a factor”.³

‘Abandonment’ is defined by the project team as the process by which “The family of the girl/woman of which the honour has been violated or threatened to be violated, (or because of educational or marital problems), abandons or sends the man/boy/woman/girl back to the country of origin where this person lives in the care of the grandparents or other relatives or is left alone without family to turn to.”

Like most forms of oppression and violence against women HRV is based on claims to control women’s sexual and social choices and the perception of women as male property, which pervades all societies around the world. HRV is a global problem but seems to be more prevalent in certain parts of the world, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and countries in the Middle East. Female genital mutilation, which is also considered a form of honour related violence and harmful traditional practice, has been identified in 28 countries of Africa and the in recent years in many European countries (Kvinnoforum, 2005).

In Cypriot culture, ‘honour’ is a complex and important term. Reputation and good standing in the community are of fundamental importance. Although ‘honour’ is the pretext for much of the violence perpetrated in Cypriot society, it is not named as such, particularly within the family. Honour is invoked in the case of socially ‘unacceptable’ behaviour, primarily of the women and girls in the family, and often involving sexual or romantic relationships. The concept of honour is strongly associated with control, which is mainly exercised by the men in the family, but also by women in their role of gatekeepers for this system. Women often maintain the ‘honour’ system within families and communities as to fail to do so would put them at risk of violence themselves. When a man’s honour or that of his family is threatened or ‘stained’ the punishment is aimed at the woman perceived as responsible for infringing the limits of accepted behaviour (Kvinnoforum, 2005 p.16). Both HRV and FM constitute forms of violence which primarily affect women and girls and are based on patriarchal understandings of family honour. Contrary to common belief, honour crimes have nothing to do with religion, although perpetrators may try to justify their actions on religious grounds.

³ The United Nations describes the practice of forced marriages as a “contemporary form of slavery”. It refers to a tradition in which young women (also some young men) are forced against their will to marry a partner that the parents have chosen. When they refuse a family member threatens them of harsh consequences, even of death.

The terms *honour related violence (HRV)* and *forced marriage (FM)* were generally known to the NGOs that participated in the study. However, they expressed that crimes often committed in the name of honour are not classified as such and the term HRV is not used by the relevant actors that deal with gender based violence and/or migration and asylum issues. As a result, the term generated considerable confusion. In most cases, HRV is seen as domestic violence and, in this respect, the working terms for such crimes are domestic violence, violence against women, child abuse, sexual abuse, rape, and trafficking in human beings. This constitutes the main reason behind the lack of data on specific forms of harmful traditional practices. Most organisations claim to be guided by the 2000 Law on Domestic Violence (Law 119(1)/2000) which does not incorporate or make any special reference to HRV, FM or abandonment. As a result, violence occurring due to family honour that cannot be classified as either domestic violence or as child abuse is ignored and no specialized provision is foreseen for the victims.

Both the literature review and the interviews conducted demonstrated that HRV and FM are not perceived or addressed as forms of violence against women that are rooted in gender inequality. Honour crimes are often referred to as “*egklimata pathous*” (passion crimes), a term which renders invisible the root causes of such crimes and those social norms and patriarchal attitudes that normalize violence against women. Likewise, cases of FM are mainly conceptualised and understood by the general public only as a practice taking place in ‘other cultures’ primarily involving members of migrant and ethnic groups. Importantly, and as will be seen further below, FM is also addressed within the framework of “marriages for economic reasons” and/or “marriages of convenience” which are understood mainly as marriages that take place involving a migrant man or women for the purpose of gaining legal status. However, such marriages are not recognized as a means of forced marriage imposed on women with limited economic options.

The term ‘abandonment’ was virtually unknown to the organisations participating in the study, and no policy document was found defining such a problem. For this reason, the present report focuses primarily on honour related violence and forced marriage.

2

CURRENT SITUATION IN CYPRUS

2.1 POLITICAL CLIMATE ON MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

In today's world of massive migration flows and globalisation, the position of women is changing both quantitatively, according to the International Organisation of Migration, as in several countries constitute the majority, and qualitatively as more and more women are migrating independently of their male partners. Cyprus is no exception to this global phenomenon that has come to be called the feminisation of migration (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2008).

Migrant and Ethnic Minority Communities

Up to the 1970s, Cyprus was a country of emigration (mostly to the UK but also to other destinations) for better work opportunities before as well as after the ethnic clashes and the Turkish invasion and occupation of 1974. However, economic development and growth in many sectors, as well as the abandonment of restrictive immigration policies in 1990 opened the doors for 'importing' foreign workers (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, 2007). Furthermore, the process of accession to the EU made Cyprus an attractive destination for migrants and asylum seekers (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, 2007). Immigration actually constitutes 10% of the population of Cyprus coming from both EU and third countries clearing rendering Cyprus an immigration country (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, 2009). According to the ECRI report on Cyprus (2010) the government-controlled areas are home to around 140,000 people who do not belong to the ethnic Greek Cypriot majority. There are also estimated to be around 30,000 undocumented migrants in Cyprus (over-stayers, rejected asylum seekers and otherwise irregular migrants). According to the Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior (April 2009), the main countries of origin of third-country migrant women and men are the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Moldova, Georgia and the Ukraine. At the moment there is no data in relation to migrant populations living in the northern part of the island.

Most migrants in Cyprus are employed in domestic work (migrant women), the service industry – mainly tourism and trade, the manufacturing industry, agriculture, construction work, and generally, in low status and low-paid jobs. The fact that the vast

majority of migrants employed in private households in Cyprus are females suggests that the labour market is strongly gender segregated. The choices and employment opportunities of immigrant women are limited by current hierarchal structures and cultural practices in the receiving countries that confine them in low paid industries and occupations traditionally reserved for women. According to the International Labour Organisation, “Gender based discrimination intersects with discrimination based on other forms of “otherness” such as non-national/foreigner status, race, ethnicity religion, economic status – placing women in a situation of double, triple and even four-fold discrimination, disadvantage, marginalisation and/or vulnerability” (ILO, 2003).

In relation to asylum seekers and refugees, of the 44,287 applicants who filed from 2002 to the end of 2010, 288 were granted full refugee status and 2,408 were granted subsidiary protection status and humanitarian status. According to UNHCR Cyprus, as of January 2011, 3,394 refugees and 5,396 asylum seekers are residing in Cyprus. Asylum seekers and refugees are among the poorest, most excluded, marginalized and vulnerable social groups in Cyprus. Even more vulnerable to exclusion within these groups are women and girls, as asylum applications are investigated under the name of the applicant which is usually the male head of the family. The dependents of the applicant are rarely given any attention in their own right but only for the purposes of supporting the application of the (male) head of family. For this reason, gender-based grounds for granting asylum such as HRV or FM are largely ignored.

In Europe, women and girls in Roma communities are victims of child marriage and forced marriage, as well as domestic violence. According to the Council of Europe Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2010) on the *Situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe*, discrimination against Roma women in Europe, involves among other, forced and arranged child marriages which constitute a human rights violation and lead to very substantial high-school drop-out rates, as well as early pregnancies. Roma are a community that is discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Cypriot authorities have no particular measures for their integration in employment, education, health care or other social programmes. Support is limited to material support for the building of basic accommodation units in a remote and abandoned village as a response to European criticism (Council of Europe, 2006; Polycarpou, 2010). According to the ECRI Report (2010) on Cyprus, the Roma in Cyprus have largely been ignored, avoided and marginalised in society. They have never been recognised as a national minority, religious group or anything that refers to their identity and culture.

In this environment, where cultural difference is stigmatised and patriarchal regimes still affect the everyday life of women and men, issues affecting primarily women and girls, such as HRV and FM, remain silenced by migrant women for fear of being further marginalized. This is also evident in the school environment where patriarchal regimes persist in the school lives of migrant girls in Cyprus. According to a recent MIGS study on young migrant women in secondary education (Gregoriou, Z. and Christou, G., 2011), although living in Cyprus and adjusting to Cypriot gender norms can be a liberating experience for young migrant girls, some young migrant women

are under another type of patriarchal surveillance: the one inflicted upon them by the male members of their ethnic community. According to the study, young migrant women develop strategies to resist and overcome these regulatory contexts such as not socializing with boys, having friends and colleagues cover for them when they want to go out, etc. However, it must be emphasised that further research is necessary which would specifically focus on issues of HRV and FM within migrant communities in Cyprus.

Unfortunately, no research or data exists on gender based violence within ethnic minority and migrant communities in Cyprus and thus it is not possible to make any assumptions as to its prevalence. In fact, data on gender based violence is generally lacking, with the exception of criminal statistics and data collected by NGOs such as the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, and the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Unit of the Cyprus Police. Furthermore, FM and HRV are not recognized as forms of gender based violence in the Cypriot context, either legally or otherwise, making it impossible to distinguish such crimes from the data available. It is also worth mentioning that, despite the significant migrant population in Cyprus, migrant and ethnic minority women are absent from the National Action Plan on Combating Violence in the Family (2010-2015), the National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2007-2013) and in the National Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals (2010-2012) rendering them invisible on a policy level. Generally there is an absence of public debate on the integration of migrant women and men and third country nationals in particular.

Sexism, Racism and Xenophobia in Public discourse

The media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion about female migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. According to a study carried out by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender studies (2005), the Cyprus media largely portray and discuss women in ways which support gender inequality. However, in recent years the issue of violence against women has taken a more prominent place in media reporting, particularly in the print media. Journalists, mainly young women, are taking an increasing interest on women's rights and gender equality issues (Crepaldi, C. et al., 2010). However, by and large, the media continue to reinforce negative gender stereotypes, particularly in relation to violence against women. The emphasis is often placed on reporting 'shocking' events regarding the abuse of women rather than raising awareness. Furthermore, violence against women is often trivialized using a victim-blaming or sensationalist discourse. There is rarely any media follow up on cases of violence against women, and there are no channels for the plural voices of migrant women, asylum seekers and refugees.

Media engagement with the issue of female immigration and migrants in general does not reflect its real weight in society. Through the media migrant women are defined as dependent and economically inactive, contextualised in the framework of family, maternity, and reproduction with scarce recognition of their feminine individuality

(Nash, 2006). The female migrant community is represented in the media as a homogenous group creating a false cultural representation of a hugely diverse group.

In relation to public discourse on migrants more generally, as in other European countries, there has been a rise in racist and xenophobic attitudes among the general public and a negative climate of opinion towards immigrants in Cyprus. This is related to the onset of the economic crisis and the steep rise in unemployment rates for which migrants, and in particular asylum seekers, have been held partly responsible for. The portrayal of asylum seekers as “scroungers” dependent on welfare benefits fuels negative attitudes towards them. One recent example of such a portrayal was the electronic circulation of an image of a welfare payment statement for an asylum seeker showing monthly benefits amounting to more than the average wage of a Greek-Cypriot. This provoked public outrage. However, what the electronic version failed to show was that the sum covered a period of many months and had to sustain the asylum seeker and his dependents. Following this, three opposition parties submitted a request to Parliament to reduce the benefits granted to asylum seekers and refugees (ECRI Report, 2010 pp.25-26).

To conclude, all relevant stakeholders need to take into account the implications of policy on those groups found at the intersection of multiple inequalities. It is therefore important to consider that race and culture contribute to the silencing of VAW issues and to reveal the complex connection between migration, women’s rights, cultural rights and public policies, relating to harmful traditional practices including FM and HRV (Strid, S., et al., 2008; Del Giorgio, E., et al., 2008). Consequently, migration, ethnicity, and tradition should be taken into consideration for understanding the context of FGM, HRV, FM, and abandonment, especially since potential victims need to turn to doctors, social workers and the police, by whom they often feel rejected. In this view, trust building and integration is still a challenge for migrant communities in Cyprus and in Europe (Albert et al., 2010).

2.2 MAIN FEATURES AND RECENT TRENDS

For the purposes of this study, the main framework for discussing honour related violence and forced marriage in the Cyprus context is inevitably domestic violence, violence against women, and child abuse, as these are the three most frequent terms used in the course of the focus groups and interviews. In many cases, however, these crimes can still be classified as HRV since the justification given for such violence is the protection of “family honour”, “family name” or even the protection of the man’s “status” in the community or perceived dignity and honour (in cases of adultery or potential separation). While it is important to distinguish HRV and FM as specific forms of gender based violence, these distinctions do not exist in Cyprus and, thus, one of the major goals of this report is to attempt to highlight such distinctions and raise awareness among relevant actors.

National data on the prevalence of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, is scarce and the only data available are those collected on domestic

violence by the Cyprus Police and the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, the only NGO that runs a domestic violence hotline and women's shelter. Population based surveys on the prevalence, as well as the effects of all forms of violence against women are non-existent and questions on violence against women are not included in other national surveys such as those on health, well-being and quality of life. Police statistics make it possible to describe the trend in *reported* cases of domestic violence but do not give a true picture of the prevalence of domestic violence nor of the prevalence of other forms of violence against women or harmful traditional practices in Cyprus (MIGS, 2011a).

The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, a coordinating body for the monitoring of violence in the family, has for some years now, been coordinating efforts to create a unified database under the Law Services of the Republic to which all front-line services such as the Social Welfare Services, the Health Services, and the Police will contribute under the principle of "mandatory reporting". However, developments have been slow and it is not clear when the database will be fully functional. The establishment of the database has been included in the recently published National Action Plan on the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2010-2015), however no timeline for this has been indicated. The Advisory Committee also has the authority to commission studies on violence in the family, but, to date, the only prevalence study that has taken place involved the impact of violence in the family on children of 12-18 years (MIGS, 2011a).

The prevalence of reported domestic violence has risen dramatically in the last decade. Criminal statistics collected by the Cyprus Police show a general trend of increased reporting of violence in the family with reported cases almost doubling from 2002 to 2008 (538 and 959 cases respectively). Over this period the large majority of cases have involved physical violence (79%), followed by psychological violence (18.5%) and sexual violence (2.4%). All forms of violence have shown an increase over this time period. In terms of sexual violence, the fact that marital rape was recognized and penalized under the amended law on family violence in 2004, may have indirectly contributed to the increase in reported cases.

According to the statistics of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, cases of domestic violence have tripled over the period 2000-2011 (from 553 cases in 2000 to 1320 cases in 2011). The vast majority of victims over this period have been women with 80.3% in 2010 as compared to 9.6% men.⁴

Although the increase in reporting rates can be partly explained by increased awareness and a relatively good legislative framework (on domestic violence) the lack of prevalence studies hides the fact that violence against women is, as elsewhere, one of the least reported crimes. This is due to ingrained socio-cultural attitudes that render violent behaviour normal and acceptable, persistent economic inequalities between women and men, a lack of confidence in the ability of the relevant authorities, a lack

4 Cyprus Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family www.domviolence.org.cy.

of resources for women victims of violence, fear of social stigmatization, and a general culture of victim blaming in relation to violence against women. One can assume that this is equally true in relation to violence within migrant and ethnic communities given that women in these communities are particularly marginalized and vulnerable to xenophobic, racist, and sexist attitudes on behalf of the authorities. Even more discouraging is the high level of ‘attrition’ in the course of investigations and prosecutions of domestic violence. A very high number of cases of reported do not develop into criminal investigations, and even less proceed to court. Half of those that do make it through the legal process are suspended, interrupted, withdrawn or rejected by the courts. The conviction rate is also appallingly low, and penalties do not provide any real deterrent to perpetrators and are not preventative on a wider social level. (MIGS, 2011)

The majority of organizations that participated in this study agreed that issues of HRV and FM are only encountered within the framework of their work on domestic violence. They reported that HRV and arranged, semi-arranged or forced marriage affect women from all socio-economic backgrounds, with migrant women and LGBT people particularly vulnerable.

According to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO), although HRV and FM are not working terms for the organisation they do come across cases of domestic violence where “female infidelity damages a man’s reputation” and where “reputation can be restored through violence”, clearly characterising a culture of honour. The Cyprus Police (Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office) explained that they have also come across several cases of domestic violence in which violence has been used as a means to restore a man’s status/reputation following the infidelity of his partner or following a separation. However, such cases are not classified as honour crimes.

Both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot organisations emphasised that women in relatively small and patriarchal communities, such as Cyprus, are expected to remain loyal in the face of various forms of violence perpetrated against them. In ‘cultures of honour’ what is considered a “good” woman carries great influence in determining the reputation of a family and female gender norms stress modesty, shame, and behaviour that will not threaten the “good name” of the family. Because male honour often requires female respect and fidelity, relationships between women and men carry an underlying tension that serves as a catalyst for domestic violence. Honour may be used directly or indirectly as a justification for violence against women (Vandello and Cohen, 2003). Within this framework, male violence against women may be seen as necessary to preserve the integrity of the man, the family, and, by extension, the community (Loizos, 1978). Thus, a woman must sacrifice herself for the good of the family or relationship regardless of personal cost:

“A Cypriot woman, who experienced violence from her husband, couldn’t exit the marriage because her family did not support her because they believed that she should stay with her husband for the benefit of the children. This is condoned by the family due to the perception that marriages must last whatever it takes. In response to the question “why do you still stay in a violent marriage?” women say that their mother (or other close relatives)

told them that they should stay for the sake of the children and the family and to avoid the social stigma that they will face. Women recognise that there is a problem and this is the only reason why they stay in problematic marriages. Violence is accepted by the victims for by the community because “einai o stauros pou mou anathese o theos kai tha to anteksw” (this is the cross that God has commissioned to me to carry for all my life and I will bear it).”

- Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO)

The Association SPAVO made specific reference to cases of mixed marriages among Greek-Cypriot men and migrant women, emphasising the vulnerability of women with migrant background to domestic violence and abuse. They stressed that there are significant gaps in the victim support system, particularly in the absence of specialized, accessible and culturally sensitive services for women of migrant background. The Association provides women with emergency shelter as well as information and support, as well as in relation to securing independent migrant status, as a migrant's woman's legal status is dependent on her spouse: “The violent husband in many cases threatens to send them back to their countries and take away their children”.

Furthermore, according to SPAVO, forced marriage or semi-forced marriage may be taking place in less visible ways:

“They find them a job [Greek-Cypriot men] and the women think that they will have a better life. Later on though they are forced to marry the person who arranged their paper work and who now lives with them. Within this framework women experience psychological and physical violence ... Also, third country nationals force female EU nationals to get married in order to receive the resident status and benefits We do not have many such cases but we have had at least 3-4 cases in the last year. These cases were referred to the Association for the provision of shelter. In other instances -often in rural areas - due to an unexpected pregnancy young women are being forced to marry their boyfriends in order to protect their family's “name” from her “provocative” and “dishonourable” behaviour, and to avoid stigmatisation from the community.”

- Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO)

In relation to the Turkish-Cypriot community, the participants expressed the view that the definition of forced marriage should be broad enough to involve semi-forced marriages and/or arranged marriages (which according to independent analysts take place in different contexts both in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities). There was an extensive discussion during the focus group regarding the extent to which some arranged marriages can be classified as forced. A “semi-forced marriage” has been defined by Nielsen (2005) as the one in which the young woman or man has been involved in decision making process. For example, in arranged marriages it is often the young woman or man that chooses one of the eligible persons that the families introduce to him. However, the reason it has been defined as ‘semi-forced’ is the fact that the young person's choice is, in some cases, extremely limited. Young women and men are being brought up in such strict environments that they have no choice but to accept one of the parents' choices (Nielsen, 2005). Thus semi-forced marriages are

very difficult to identify because young people feel responsible for their participation in the decision-making process. In many instances young women who grow up in strict patriarchal family environments perceive marriage as a gateway to their personal freedom from the control exercised on them by their families (mainly by the male members). Under these circumstances, the issue that arises is whether or not the decision to marry is one of free choice.

According to Nielsen (2005) the practice of arranged marriages constitutes a biased framework within which the rights of youth and especially young women are undermined. Although such marriages often function more or less to the satisfaction of many youth, the issue of arranged marriages is vast and should therefore be further explored.

The UNHCR-Cyprus stated that HRV and FM are issues often encountered in cases for international protection and especially on grounds of gender specific persecutions. Cases of HRV are usually from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, and the Middle East. Cases encountered by the UNHCR in Cyprus mainly concern women and girls fleeing from forced marriage in the Middle East and Africa. Despite this, they felt that asylum professionals are in need of more specialized training in order to better handle such cases.

Abandonment

In relation to abandonment, the current study revealed that the term is hardly known and even more rarely used by organisations in Cyprus and this is the first attempt to explore and map to some extent its incidence and occurrence. According to UNHCR-Cyprus the very few cases of abandonment that they have come across involve women asylum seekers that end up in Cyprus after having been ostracised for being victims of rape or for having an extramarital affair. More rarely, cases of abandonment involve the neglect or abandonment of children for not consenting to marry.

Forced Marriage and Wife Importing Within the Framework of Trafficking In Human Beings

One of the main findings of this study was that in Cyprus there is a strong link between the issue of trafficking in women and forced marriage, suggesting the existence of a different context within which to define the problem of FM.

According to the Cyprus Police, such cases involve trafficked women from European countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia that are recruited under false pretences. In some cases women are recruited through job search websites. When they arrive in Cyprus they are coerced to marry male third country nationals for the purpose of granting European citizenship and/or residence permits. Socio-economic conditions such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of education serve

as push factors for women to migrate and to proceed with “marriages of convenience”⁵. This is an organised circuit in which men, the “grooms”, are directly involved. In other instances, according to the police, under the “pink advertisements” (“roz aggelies”) – equivalent to a “lonely hearts” section – in newspapers various advertisements by male third country nationals search for European women for marriage.

“At that moment [when they arrive in Cyprus] women discover that they have been trafficked and sometimes they find themselves locked in private apartments until they consent to marry. The grooms are usually third country nationals who coerce the women using threats and violence. In some other cases they are victims of sexual exploitation and coerced into prostitution by the man who wants to marry them. In some cases, the woman is coerced into prostitution before the marriage take place.”

- Representative, Anti-Trafficking Unit, Cyprus Police

In 2010, ten women were identified by the Cyprus Police as victims of trafficking in human beings within the framework of “marriages of convenience” and in 2011 an additional 14 were identified. According to the representative interviewed, the definition of forced marriage is broad enough to include this particular form of exploitation. Although traditionally forced marriages take place mainly because of family pride or social obligation, in these cases the element of force lies in the woman being exploited and coerced to get married.

According to the police, such cases can take up to two years to reach trial, which constitutes a huge challenge for the successful prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators. Specifically, all 10 cases identified by the police are still under court investigation, whilst 8 out of 10 victims have already left the country, putting into question their availability and willingness to testify. Furthermore, the Law on Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of Victims (2007) does not include the issue of forced marriage nor “marriage of convenience” as a form of exploitation within the context of trafficking, also posing a serious challenge to the effective prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators. These gaps in the legislation have been addressed by prosecuting the particular cases under the Penal Code provisions on forced marriage and the Migration Law which includes some provisions on marriages of convenience:

“Forced marriage is a form of exploitation and a human rights abuse which should be included in the trafficking law. There is a need for more coordinated procedures in victim support provision as well as within the law services in order to be able to convict the perpetrators and to be more pro-active in preventing these crimes.”

- Representative, Anti-Trafficking Unit, Cyprus Police

⁵ “Marriage of Convenience” is defined in the Migration Law L. 29(I)/2009 as the marriage between a Cypriot citizen or a foreigner who legally resides in the Republic, with a foreigner with only purpose to grant residence in Cyprus. Based on the definition given in the law, marriage of convenience is widely perceived as a marriage to deceive public officials, and it is considered violation of the law of Cyprus, entered into with the intent to gain immigration rights for one of the spouses.

The police expressed the need for urgent revision of the trafficking law and the inclusion of forced marriage as a form of exploitation, stressing that the increasing number of cases being identified demonstrates a new trend of trafficking in women. It should be noted that since this interview took place, a new EU Directive has been adopted against trafficking in human beings that adopts a broad definition of trafficking which includes illegal adoption, sexual exploitation, forced servitude, and forced marriage, among others. Cyprus is expected to transpose the Directive into law by 2013 which should help in bridging the existing gaps in the trafficking legislation.

Another concern expressed by the police involves the occurrence of cases involving “mail order brides” or “wife importing”, which has been described by Roks (2011) as a situation where a man enters into a relationship with a foreign woman with the purpose of exploiting her - as labour or a household worker, for being waited on or for sex. For this purpose, “marriage agency” web sites and/or “mail-order bride companies” operating worldwide play a critical role in the recruitment of vulnerable women. Human rights activists and NGOs suspect that women who find partners through marriage agencies are at a higher risk of becoming victims of trafficking and exploitation. However, there is still very little data available to confirm this.

The findings of this study point to the need for further research on trafficking in women for the purpose of forced marriage, particularly with regard to women and girls that are recruited through “marriage agencies” and “mail-order bride” companies.

2.3 POLICY IN ADDRESSING HONOUR RELATED VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGE

The Cyprus government does not have any legislation specifically addressing HRV, FM or abandonment. Domestic violence is the form of violence against women that has received the greatest level of support by the Cyprus Government. This can be explained in part by the fact that in Cyprus, as in Europe and worldwide, intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women. However, the fact that other forms of violence against women are given little, if any, attention reveals a general lack of awareness and understanding of the scope and nature of violence against women as well as, a lack of real political will to combat the phenomenon (MIGS, 2011a).

Honour Related Violence

Cyprus has a comprehensive legal framework to address violence in the family which has been the basis of all action on domestic violence to date. However, this poses a critical problem: The term violence in the family as defined by law is gender-neutral and covers violent behaviour perpetrated by any member of the family toward any member of the family ignoring the gender specificities of the violence. Furthermore, the term “family violence” fails to highlight that violence against women largely stems from

women's subordinate status in society (WHO, 2005). Thus, it is evident that domestic violence is not, in fact, recognized or defined as a form of violence against women.

Domestic violence is criminalised under The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law 47 (I)/1994, replaced by Law 119(I)/2000, and later amended in 2004 by Law 212(I)/2004. The Law *inter alia* condemns any act of violence within the family, raises substantially the penalties for violence, provides protection to victims mainly by empowering the Court to issue restraining orders, clarifies that rape can be committed within marriage, facilitates the reporting of violent incidents, provides for the appointment of Family Counsellors, the setting up of the Advisory Committee to monitor the implementation of the Law, taking testimonies of victims of violence by electronic means, establishment of a shelter for victims, the protection of victims and witnesses, and makes the spouse a compellable witness if the victim is another member of the family. Despite the law's gender neutrality, it does recognize that rape can be committed within marriage and makes extensive provision for the protection of victims.

As a consequence of the gender-blind approach, all policies and measures to combat domestic violence adopted in Cyprus, have failed to address the root causes of such violence on the one hand and have failed to meet the specific needs of women victims of violence and their children on another (MIGS, 2011). Similarly, although the NAP on Family Violence recognizes that violence disproportionately affects women and is perpetrated by men, it does not fully incorporate a gender perspective. As mentioned above, the NAP does not foresee any actions on combating HRV and other harmful traditional practices, nor does it foresee actions in relation to violence against women from migrant and/or ethnic communities.

Cyprus ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and its Optional Protocol in 2002. CEDAW requires states to provide legal protection for women's rights on an equal basis with men and to guarantee the effective protection of women against discrimination. Under CEDAW, states are obligated to take appropriate measures to modify social and cultural patterns that discriminate against women (art 5(a)). General Recommendation 19 states that "[t]raditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage, dowry deaths, acid attacks and female genital mutilation. Such prejudices and practices may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women. The effect of such violence on the physical and mental integrity of women is to deprive them the equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms."⁶ Specifically, with regard to "honour" crimes and killings, CEDAW General Recommendation 19 states that measures necessary to overcome family violence include "[l]egislation to remove the defence of honour in regard to the assault or murder of a female family member"

6 Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women General Recommendation 19 [<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>]

(§ 24(r)(ii)). However, there is no evidence to suggest that General Recommendation 19 has been incorporated into policy to combat violence against women in Cyprus.

On 7 April 2011 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a landmark new Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This Convention is the first legally binding instrument in the world creating a comprehensive legal framework to prevent violence, to protect victims and to end with the impunity of perpetrators. It defines and criminalises various forms of male violence against women including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking, physical and psychological violence and sexual violence. The Convention makes it clear that each country must ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence, through services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, and assistance in finding employment without any discrimination based on gender, ethnic or migrant background. The Convention was opened for signature in Istanbul on 11 May 2011 and was signed by 13 countries (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, and Finland). However, Cyprus has not shown any intention of ratifying the treaty yet.

Forced Marriage

There are a number of provisions in civil and criminal law that are applicable in preventing and combating forced marriage.

Under Article 154 of the Penal Code, there is a clear reference to forced marriage: “Whoever using coercion persuades another to marry, despite his/her will, is guilty of a misdemeanour.” As mentioned above, the Cyprus police often refer to the penal code in order to handle recent cases of trafficking in women who are forced to marry male third country nationals for the purpose of “marriages of convenience”.

The Marriage Law 104 (I) of 2003 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years and specifies that no marriage shall be legally entered into without the “full and free consent of both parties” (article 14). Minors can be allowed to marry from age 16 under “special circumstances” if the parents consent. However, it is not clear what “special circumstances” may apply in such cases. This may constitute a window of opportunity for coercion of young people (especially girls/young women) to enter into marriage after an unexpected pregnancy, given that abortion in Cyprus is legal only under restrictive circumstances. Hence, this provision in the marriage law is problematic since it may be misused for the purposes of coercion into marriage. At the same time, the law specifies that the free consent of both parties cannot be considered to be given when and if any of the parties have been coerced/forced to the particular marriage through “Any action, act or omission which may cause fear in the average reasonable person, that will expose a person to imminent danger to life, honour, freedom, physical integrity or to his/her property or that of his/her family members, and based on such fear gives his/her consent to marriage. Any legal, illegal or against public morals act or action or

statement that may cause fear to the average reasonable person and thereby extract the consent of one or both persons for the purpose of marriage.”

The Cyprus Aliens and Migration Law L. 29(I)/2009 includes a specific article related to marriages of convenience which has been shown to be of relevance for the issue of forced marriage in Cyprus. “Marriage of Convenience” is defined as the marriage between a Cypriot citizen or a person who legally resides in the Republic, with a foreigner with the only purpose of gaining resident status in Cyprus. Based on the definition given in the law, marriage of convenience is widely perceived as a marriage to deceive public officials and is entered into with the intent to gain immigration rights for one of the spouses.

Another provision of the Aliens and Migration Law which is relevant to forced marriage refers to family reunification setting the age of 21 years as a strict limit for the entry of a spouse into Cyprus, in conformity with Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003. It has often been argued that posing strict age limitations for family reunification is also a tool for preventing forced marriages. In various European countries, however, such as the UK and Italy, there are heated debates as to whether the law and age regulations actually do prevent forced marriage or are actually designed to hinder family reunification for migrants or even further stigmatise already discriminated groups of women (Strid, S., et al., 2008; Del Giorgio, E., et al., 2008). It is important to note that the Aliens and Migration Law also provides for autonomous residence permits in the Republic to victims of domestic violence or trafficking or sexual exploitation.

Legislation in Cyprus, despite recent improvements, is in need of upgrading, renewal and close monitoring as current laws do not adequately cover all forms of gender based violence and are poorly implemented. Policy and legislation on gender based violence must encompass a range of forms of violence including sexual assault and rape, stalking, as well as honour related violence and forced marriage. However, a significant debate was raised in relation to whether HRV and/or FM should be criminalized with specific legislation. Many women’s organisations and migrant women organisations across Europe want to avoid the criminalisation of FM and HRV, and prefer that available sanctions within already existing civil and criminal legislation are used. There is a general fear among these organisations that criminalising FM and HRV will turn forced marriage into an ethnic minority problem rather than a problem of violence against women, and that this will further stigmatize ethnic minority and migrant groups (Quing, Report UK, 2008). Despite this, it is recognized that a specialized approach on HRV and FM is still necessary. In the absence of any public debate on these issues in Cyprus, it was difficult for those that participated in this study to come to any clear conclusion on the issue of criminalization. On the other hand, the Association for the Prevention and Handling Violence in the Family felt that the inclusion of HRV in the domestic violence law would enable them as well as other relevant stakeholders to address the issue within the framework of domestic violence.

The focus group participants expressed the opinion that the absence of any policy of the Cyprus government on the combat of HRV, FM and abandonment, may contribute

to the general lack of awareness and knowledge on these issues. Another important barrier in adequately addressing the problem is the serious lack of funding for government services and NGOs dealing with issues of gender based violence, which limits their capacity to effectively provide support and protection to victims as well as their scope of action. According to the UNHCR Cyprus, one positive development has been the amendment of the refugee law in 2002 to include gender-specific persecution as grounds for asylum. This provides the UNHCR with the mandate to provide protection and assistance to women fleeing HRV, FM and other forms of violence such as FGM.

All participants expressed that policies to combat gender based violence are frequently problematic and non-effective, due to the lack of awareness and training among policy makers and service providers. It was felt that the incorporation of HRV and FM in the professional education of the police, the judiciary and legal prosecutors, teachers and educators, social welfare officers, the asylum and health professionals constitutes an essential prerequisite to better deal with these issues in Cyprus. In the field of asylum where most of the HRV and FM cases occur, officers need to have the necessary training and expertise to identify cases in accordance with the relevant laws. The lack of systematic professional training hampers the ability to properly support and protect victims:

“For example the asylum officers do not always understand that the existence of one NGO in Nigeria is not enough to assume that the victim had recourse to assistance. In Nigeria there are millions of cases of HRV and FM. With this attitude we cannot effectively protect the victims. In countries of origin, a woman victim of HRV or FM going to a shelter does not mean that she will be safe, because there have been cases where the perpetrator has discovered where the shelter is located and killed her. Asylum officers need specific training in order to become more aware and to understand that the mere existence of one NGO [in the country of origin] cannot exclude the possibility of a woman being at risk.”

- Representative, UNHCR Cyprus

It is evident that a coherent policy and approach is needed in order to address HRV, FM and other harmful traditional practices. For this purpose, consultation with migrant and ethnic communities in Cyprus as well as with grass root organisations and NGOs is essential. HRV and FM should be integrated in overall approach and discussion on combating domestic violence while aiming to avoid further marginalisation and stigmatisation of migrants, and particularly migrant women. Such an approach should involve legal measures, awareness raising and information, vocational trainings for professionals, and specialized support services, and inter-agency cooperation.

Area administered by Turkish Cypriots

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots the legislative framework in relation to violence against women is very weak. The law does not specifically prohibit honour related violence, forced marriage or abandonment, whilst there are no NGOs whose specific mission is to support domestic violence, rape, HRV, or FM victims. Generally,

the reporting rates of violence against women are low. The law prohibits domestic violence under a general assault/violence/battery clause in the criminal code. Even though allegations of domestic violence are usually considered a family matter and settled out of court, 29 domestic violence cases were tried during 2009; all of these were completed during the year and all resulted in various fines and bail but no prison sentences (US State Department Human Rights Report, 2010). During 2010, prosecutors brought nine cases of domestic violence, and all were in the trial process at year's end. Authorities considered a case more credible if there was at least one witness in addition to the victim (US State Department Human Rights Report, 2010). Generally, domestic violence is not discussed widely, and any such incidents largely go unreported. There is an urgent need for gender mainstreaming of policies and laws, and systematic training of relevant stakeholders in order to better handle all forms of violence against women. The law provides no minimum sentence for individuals convicted of rape, including spousal rape; however, the maximum sentence is life imprisonment. According to one NGO:

“Policy makers have to be very careful not to create situations where the victim has no other option than returning to the abuser [...] Although Turkish-Cypriots are becoming more progressive on these issues now, the fact that there is no mention of HRV or FM in the family law, consists a serious gap in reporting such cases due to the silence surrounding these issues”.

- Representative, Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS)

According to the US State Department Human Rights Report 2010, domestic violence is not specifically defined in the law and certain requirements for the protection of women's rights, such as the right to education, rehabilitation services, and special units in the police and health departments, are not being met. Although there are several NGOs working in the field of women's rights, there is no specific official agency that has this responsibility, nor is there any shelter provision (private or governmental) for providing support to victims of gender based violence.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF THE VICTIM SUPPORT SYSTEM IN CYPRUS

The existing victim support system in Cyprus is mainly designed to support victims of domestic violence and trafficking and there are no specific or specialized services for victims of HRV and FM. In a previous study carried out by MIGS (2010), women, mainly of migrant backgrounds, categorically expressed their dissatisfaction with available support provisions, particularly those provided by the Social Welfare Services who are the main providers of victim support in Cyprus. Victim support services are not culturally sensitive and there is a need for additional psychological support and empowerment programmes, as well as measures to facilitate their access to the labour market. The Cyprus government does not run a domestic violence shelter or helpline, services which are provided only by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, as will be seen below.

The Cyprus government runs a shelter for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Nicosia which is also accessible to victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage. However, the shelter actually operates as a hostel rather than a shelter as in reality it only provides accommodation and board. There are no programmes for psychological support and social inclusion/re-integration, nor is there any vocational training or education programmes. The shelter has only two full-time members of staff per shift who have no special training or background in treating victims of violence and/or trafficking. Should a victim choose to leave the shelter, she is entitled to assistance under the Public Assistance Law of 2006 which includes a monthly allowance.

In the absence of adequate government provision, NGOs can and do play a critical role in the identification, referral, and provision of support to victims of domestic violence, FGM, HRV, and FM. The organisation STIGMA arranges for safe accommodation for possible victims of trafficking as well as a range of other services for the protection and support of trafficking victims including financial support, psychosocial support, legal support and preparation for legal proceedings, and assistance in finding employment among others.⁷

The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence runs the only crisis helpline and shelter for victims of domestic violence in Cyprus. The helpline is staffed by trained psychologists and social workers that provide immediate psychological support, guidance, and information with regard to their rights, as well as to arrange personal appointments with the Association's psychologists and social workers. However, due to funding constraints the hotline is not accessible on a 24 hour basis but from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Association also offers shelter services with 12 places for women victims of violence and their children. According to the recommendation by the European Parliament with regard to minimum shelter capacity available for victims of domestic violence, 65 family places are still needed. The shelter is located in Nicosia and thus is not easily accessible to women from other cities or from rural areas. The shelter is financed by state funding and there is a maximum stay period in of 6-8 weeks. In extreme cases additional time may be given. According to the Association, the shelter does not just provide housing to women in need, but also provides them with counseling and empowerment sessions so that women can freely identify their needs and make their own decision to break the cycle of violence. There are also plans for the opening of a new shelter that will be operational by 2013. The new shelter is expected to have more capacity to host victims, have permanent staff, and will also be accessible to women with disabilities.

The organisation Action for Support, Equality, and Anti-Racism (KISA) are also an important actor given that they are the only NGO that provide free legal and social services, support, guidance and advice to migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Cyprus. KISA also provides support and assistance to victims of trafficking, with a

7 Interview carried out with STIGMA Administrative Office, Elena Pissaridou 16.03.2010

particular focus on trafficking for the purposes of forced labour. Within this framework, KISA play a critical role in identifying victims of violence, as well as in providing support to migrant women victims of violence. However, during the publication of this report the organisation was suffering from lack of financial resources resulting in the termination of its legal, social and counselling services. As the only organisation working on the rights of migrants in Cyprus, this constitutes a serious deficit in the victim support system in Cyprus.

Despite commitments made on a political level to protect victims of domestic violence and the recent adoption of a National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, the failure of the Cyprus Government to ensure that victims have immediate access to safe housing and support services belies a lack of real political will in this respect. More worrying is the fact that there is no special provision to migrant women and there is no evidence to suggest that services provided are culturally sensitive. NGOs report that migrant women face economic, geographical, and cultural barriers in accessing adequate psychological, legal, medical, and financial support. Migrant women are not encouraged to seek help from government services and are generally mistrustful towards them due to racist, xenophobic and sexist attitudes among officers working in government services. This makes the role of NGOs that provide free legal and social services to victims of violence all the more important as they play a significant role in identifying victims, and referring them to other relevant services.

The current study supports the findings of previous studies carried out by MIGS (2010, 2011) in revealing that there is lack of trained and experienced professionals in front-line services for women victims of violence posing serious questions as to the quality of services provided. Systematic training programmes on violence against women and gender equality is critical for all those professionals that operate as gateways for the identification of victims and that provide access to victim support services. Furthermore, none of the services evaluated incorporate a gender perspective in their work, and demonstrate a lack of understanding of the dynamics of violence against women. The majority of service providers do not recognize the link between violence against women and inequality between women and men, and all adopt the legal definition of family violence which is gender blind. Often, service providers hold stereotypical attitudes towards women and 'victim blaming' prevails among those that have responsibility for protecting victims (MIGS, 2011).

Systematic training of professional staff is essential in all services dealing with violence against women in all sectors including the Police, the Welfare Services, officers of the Law Services as well as the Judiciary and the Health Services. Training workshops and programmes for professionals are occasionally held by trainers from women's organisations working in the anti-violence field but, unfortunately this cannot replace the need for regular and systematic intra and inter-agency training. For instance, the Law Services play very little role in effective victim support which directly affects the rates of attrition and conviction in domestic violence cases. There is a general lack of expertise among public prosecutors on issues of violence against women, as well as a lack of awareness and sensitivity. Similarly, although it is widely recognized that the

Health Services can play a vital role in identifying abuse, providing victims with the necessary treatment, and referring women to appropriate care, the Health Services in Cyprus have played a very limited role in this respect. Health professionals themselves feel that they are not adequately trained to identify victims of gender based violence or to intervene effectively (MIGS, 2011a; Apostolidou, 2007).

Participants in this study also stressed the importance of education in primary prevention strategies to challenge those gender based attitudes and perceptions that support and perpetuate violence against women. The education system is one of the primary sources of cultural norms, including those that support gender based violence such as gender stereotyping and the reinforcement of rigid gender roles of what is supposedly 'appropriate' behaviour for boys and girls (MIGS, 2011a). It is also important to take into account how the intersection of gender and ethnic stereotyping produces forms of exclusion and marginalization as experienced by young migrant girls in the educational context (MIGS, 2011b). Despite the importance of strategies to reach adolescents and young adults in preventing violence, this dimension has been ignored by those involved in the domestic violence policy agenda. Some initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Education to raise awareness and train teachers and educators on gender equality issues including domestic violence; however these have not been implemented systematically. Furthermore, despite commitments by the Cyprus government for the incorporation of comprehensive sexuality education at all levels in the recently reformed school curriculums, this has only been achieved in part in some sections of the Health Education curriculum. Although this is undoubtedly a step forward, the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education including modules on gender relations, sexual and reproductive rights, relationships, and intimate partner violence is critical for challenging prevailing knowledge and attitudes on gender relations and gender based violence.

In order for women to overcome the consequences of violence and address those conditions that render them vulnerable to violence, a wide range of specialized support and assistance services are needed. Such services should include women's shelters and crisis centres, women's help-lines, psychological counselling and support, health treatment, legal centres, as well as re-integration and social inclusion programmes for migrant communities. It is also important that such services are offered involving different actors and stakeholders, including women's organisations and NGOs, given the multidimensional nature of violence against women and its multiple consequences.

3 GOOD PRACTICES IN COMBATING HONOUR RELATED VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGE

3.1 FACTORS OF SUCCESS

The focus groups also served as a forum for the exchange of good practice and experience in implementing projects and activities on preventing and combating violence against women and (if available) HRV, FM and abandonment. Based on the success factors discussed with both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot NGOs and other stakeholders during the study, the author developed a list of detailed factors of success grouped into four categories (Strengthening Women's Rights, 2005; Metropolitan Police Authority, 2010). Inevitably, documenting and sharing best practices can help to promote the transferability of methods and tools, increase the success of intervention programmes, and improve monitoring and evaluation.

Empowered and efficient project leadership

This factor assesses the effectiveness of partnerships working to address violence against women in general, and in particular domestic violence, HRV, FM and abandonment. Essential is the setting of a common approach and priorities ensuring they translate into effective delivery and implementation of actions to combat gender based violence and promote gender equality. Thus, each project must incorporate a gender perspective and ensure women's participation in the project leadership. Interdepartmental/multi-sectoral approaches and building alliances between different governmental and non-governmental organizations are also important factors in ensuring broad participation of relevant stakeholders. Finally, projects must be adequately evaluated in order to identify success factors and possible weaknesses in project design and implementation, and ultimately to evaluate the project's impact on the target group.

Visibility and awareness-raising

This factor assesses the extent to which the projects/programmes/activities implemented by various stakeholders to combat gender based violence are visible and have had broad outreach among the target groups. The visibility of such actions is essential for awareness-raising but also to enable the general public as well as the media to actively engage in the project activities. Furthermore, wide dissemination of information on new policies and plans, decision making, project's key messages, successes and good practices does not only encourage participants to continue, but also increases the over-

all awareness of women's rights. Also, projects offering support must be accessible to diverse communities and particularly women from ethnic/migrant backgrounds that may face additional barriers in accessing programmes and services.

Community Engagement

This factor assesses the extent to which policies, projects, activities, and services are focused on the needs and expectations of the communities they are targeting and, in particular, women and girls from marginalized communities. The level of community engagement in decision making, priorities setting, and evaluation is essential and their involvement (where possible) in problem solving initiatives is vital. Where possible, an appropriate forum must be identified for sharing information and consulting with communities, as well as with women victims of violence. Campaigns must be based on a thorough needs analysis in order to fully understand the needs, customs, behaviour, values, culture and language of the target group if they are to reach them effectively. In addition, the target groups often possess a wealth of creative ideas and potential which should be harnessed.

Appropriate knowledge and skills

This factor assesses whether those responsible for project implementation have the appropriate skills and knowledge in order to make best use of the critical success factors identified above. Within this context it is essential to achieve:

1. Clear and common understanding amongst all the project partners about the purpose and aims of the partnership working to address violence against women;
2. Understanding and knowledge of legislation, policy and practice on violence against women and the specific form of violence the project is addressing;
3. Involvement of practitioners and experts in the field;
4. Understanding of the importance of evaluation and the significance of lessons learned from past practice and performance;
5. Engagement of experienced trainers with specific expertise on violence against women that can deliver appropriate training for the specific target group using a gender equality perspective.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICES

Considering the fact that there are no NGOs in Cyprus dealing specifically with HRV, FM, and abandonment, the selection of projects/programmes/actions as good practices was based on their adaptability and transferability to different national and cultural contexts, as well as their relevance in preventing and combating all forms of violence against women. Projects addressing migrant and refugees' rights, racism and discrimination, and violence against women and girls were considered.

Good Practice #1

ORGANISATION:

Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (Non-governmental organisation/Grass Root Organisation)

TITLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Love without Pain (2007-onwards)

TYPE AND MAIN GOALS OF THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:

The programme 'Love without Pain' is designed for perpetrators of domestic violence on the one hand, and victims of violence on the other. It is directed firstly toward men with violent behaviour and is designed to help them take responsibility for their anger and behaviour, change their attitudes and perceptions towards such violence, and thus prevent violent behaviour from reoccurring. Secondly, the programme aims at empowering women victims of violence through self-compassion techniques in order to find their inner strength and be able to take the best decisions for themselves, as well as for their relationships. Thus, the programme claims to have both a preventative as well as a treatment element in that it aims to prevent negative thoughts and feelings that may lead to violent behaviours, as well as to help women recuperate from emotional pain and abuse through the practice of specific self-healing techniques.

Overall, participants are trained:

- to prevent negative thoughts and feelings that may lead to violent behaviours;
- to prevent teaching his/her children violent behaviours;
- to identify and prevent violent acts;
- to recuperate from emotional pain and abuse through the practice of specific self-healing techniques

The programme was developed by Steven Stosny in Maryland, US and was brought to Cyprus by Andreas Orfanides in 2007 and implemented on a pilot basis. It was successful in its implementation and has been put into full operation since. The programme is national in scope and is the only one of its kind being implemented in Cyprus.

TARGET GROUP(S) AND BENEFICIARIES:

The programme is mainly targeted at perpetrators and victims of domestic violence who come into contact with the Association's helpline (1440).

SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY:

Talk-shows on television and radio, newspaper articles and various presentations are arranged throughout the year in order to sensitize and inform the public about the Association and the various services offered to women victims of domestic violence.

USE OF CERTAIN METHOD OR METHODS:

The intervention programme consists of two series of workshops: one directed toward men with violence behaviour and the other for women victims of violence. The perpetrator programme aims at helping men take responsibility for their behaviour, as well as anger management and perception change in order to prevent future violence. The victim programme aims at empowering women through self-compassion techniques in order for them to find their inner strength and take the best decisions for themselves and their families.

INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS:

This is considered an example of good practice because it is the first programme available in Cyprus that targets perpetrators of violence, using interactive teaching methods. Furthermore, the programme has a preventative as well as a treatment element in that it aims to prevent violent behaviour as well as help women recuperate from abuse through self-healing techniques.

ARE THERE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WHO USE YOUR METHOD? WHERE ARE THESE METHOD(S) USED, FOR WHOM IS THE METHOD(S) AND WHO IS YOUR TARGET GROUP?

The programme originated in the United States at Maryland University. It is exercised in Correctional Services, as well as in the private sector as part of counselling methods. The target groups include individuals who wish are perpetrators or victims of domestic violence.

AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY (DESCRIPTION, WEBSITE, ETC):

- Core Value Workbook by Steven Stosny and translated by Andreas Orfanides
- Enriching Relationship Manual by Bernard Guernery, Jr. and translated by Andreas Orfanides and Agathi Karaolis.
- <http://www.domviolence.org.cy/v2/?lang=EN&cat=0>

RESULTS, OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES OF THIS ACTIVITY OR PROJECT:

This programme runs yearly (since 2007) and, according to the Association's staff, has substantially reduced the incidence of physical abuse for the individuals that were exposed to it either as a perpetrator or as a victim. The Association claims to be satisfied with the results of the programme, despite identifying areas for improvement.

EFFECT STUDIES, EVALUATIONS AND ADEQUACY TO HRV AND FM:

Evaluations of the impact of the programme are not publicly available. To date, a total number of 44 men and 52 women have participated in the programme. The programme is evaluated internally with the use of questionnaires and, according to the Association, has achieved positive results in terms of behaviour change. In relation to the programme's continuity, the project is incorporated in the organisation's work programme as an ongoing activity implemented on an annual basis. Based on the factors of success set in this study, the programme needs to increase its visibility and outreach,

as well as be accessible to diverse communities such as women and men with disabilities and migrant communities. As the programme focuses on providing practical support to perpetrators as well as victims of domestic violence, it can be adjusted to include techniques for women and men who are perpetrators or victims of HRV and FM, as forms of harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence. The project can be applied to other national contexts and implemented by organizations that have expertise in victim support in the field of HRV, FM, and violence against women and girls in general.

Good Practice #2

ORGANISATIONS:

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, END FGM European Campaign- Amnesty International, UNHCR Cyprus (Non-governmental Organisation)

TITLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Professional Development Training on Women and Refugee Status determination: Developing Quality Asylum Procedures – with specific focus on FGM as gender specific persecution (December 2010)

TYPE AND MAIN GOALS OF THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:

The training aimed to examine and improve asylum procedures and the quality and efficiency of the asylum decision making in relation to gender specific claims of international protection. Within the framework of the END FGM European Campaign (a campaign led by Amnesty International Ireland, working in partnership with a number of grass roots organisations in EU member states) the workshop gave special focus to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a form of gender based persecution in granting asylum.

The activity was initiated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, a non-profit, non-governmental women's rights organisation, in close cooperation with the UNHCR in Cyprus.

USE OF CERTAIN METHOD OR METHODS:

Presentations, case study examples and inter-agency discussion facilitated by UNHCR Cyprus experts, as well as by local and European NGO professionals in the field. The trainers used group exercises and case studies to provide a more in depth understanding of the legal framework relating to women and refugee status determination; the importance of early identification of vulnerable women applicants and related procedural matters; the types of persecution and harm, including discrimination; as well as interviewing techniques for women applicants and how to assess credibility. Through inter-agency training and group discussion, a legal expert from INTACT Brussels gave a presentation on FGM as a form of degrading treatment, within the framework of human rights and international protection.

The above method can be adjusted to accommodate other forms of harmful traditional practices such as HRV and FM as gender-based persecutions. The coverage of the activity was national, but with an international scope in relation to improving asylum procedures as well as attitudes towards women and men asylum applicants in European countries.

TARGET GROUP(S) AND BENEFICIARIES:

Professionals involved in asylum decision making (Social Welfare Services, the Reviewing Authority for Refugees, the Asylum Service, Lawyers, NGOs, and the Police) were given the opportunity to discuss current challenges in the area of women and refugee status determination, as well as to share best practices and lessons learned with local grass-roots organisations/ NGOs. In the long term, women asylum seekers were the beneficiaries of the particular activity/project.

INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS:

The event attracted over 50 participants representing the Social Welfare Services, the Reviewing Authority for Refugees, the Asylum Service- Ministry of Interior, Lawyers, NGOs and grass-roots organisations, and the Police. The activity was determined a success based on the positive feedback received from the participants that attended the training. This activity was recommended to the European Asylum Support Office as a good practice in the lobbying digest entitled “EN-GENDERING THE EUROPEAN ASYLUM SUPPORT OFFICE”, prepared by Amnesty International’s END FGM European Campaign, the European Women’s Lobby and ILGA-Europe, aimed at integrating a gender perspective into the work of the European Asylum Support Office. Another indicator of success in this activity is the employment of interdepartmental approach and the promotion of alliance-building among different governmental, non-governmental and grass roots organisations. The trainers and project partners have a clear and common understanding of violence against women, and in-depth knowledge on legislation and policy addressing specific communities and/or vulnerable groups of women.

METHOD USED ELSEWHERE:

Various European non-governmental and grass roots organisations dealing with women’s rights, asylum and health apply this method of training professionals. Similar professional development trainings are implemented by grass root organisations on a local and European level, such as UNHCR –Cyprus, Amnesty International, AIDOS Italy, INTACT - Belgium and GAMS – Belgium. The activity, if adjusted accordingly, can contribute to combating HRV and FM through the European and national asylum procedures. This particular method encourages and enhances the cooperation of the different actors involved in the asylum system as well as in the migrant support system. The specific activity gives the opportunity to state stakeholders and to grass roots organisations to exchange experiences and build alliances in the field of asylum. This method is innovative as it can be applied by organisations in other European countries, bringing together state officers and grass root organisations in combating harmful traditional practices through the integration of a gender perspective in asylum decision making procedures.

**AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY
(DESCRIPTION, WEBSITE, ETC):**

- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/calendar/migs-organises-professional-development-seminar-on-women-and-refugee-status-determination/>
- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/news/en-gendering-the-european-asylum-support-office-easo/>
- www.endfgm.eu

RESULTS, OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES OF THIS ACTIVITY OR PROJECT:

The training attracted over 50 participants representing the Social Welfare Services, the Reviewing Authority for Refugees, the Asylum Service-Ministry of Interior, lawyers, NGOs, and the Police. Participants evaluated the activity positively in the evaluation questionnaires. The activity was successful in raising awareness among the target groups on gender-based persecutions and of FGM in particular. The participants also had the opportunity to build alliances and exchange experiences and good practices with relevant NGOs and grass root organisations with the aim to better accommodate the needs of women asylum seekers who are victims of FGM.

EFFECT STUDIES, EVALUATIONS AND ADEQUACY WITH HRV AND FM:

The particular activity has been selected as a good practice by the European Women's Lobby, ILGA Europe, and the END FGM European Campaign, as a practice that embraced empowered and efficient leadership of the project, awareness raising of relevant stakeholders, and the involvement of grass root organisations and experts (who keep up to date of the changing landscape of legislation and policy with respect to VAW agenda) in the capacity building of professionals involved in the asylum decision making procedures. Although the focus of the particular activity was FGM as a form of harmful traditional practice and gender-based persecution, such a method could be applied by other NGOs and grass roots organisations in other countries. This can be done by providing professional development training to stakeholders involved in the asylum system in order to better combat HRV and FM and to better understand challenges identified together with grass roots organisations working in the field of migrants, refugees, and gender based violence. By adjusting this method in combating HRV and FM, the participants of the training will have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and awareness on the issue of HRV and FM as forms of gender based persecution and harmful traditional practices. They will also have an invaluable opportunity to build alliances and exchange experiences and good practices with relevant NGOs and grass root organisations with the aim to better accommodate the needs of women and men asylum seekers who are victims or are at risk of HRV and FM.

Good Practice #3

ORGANISATION:

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) (Non-governmental Organisation), Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence (Independent Governmental Body)

TITLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Professional Development Training on “Recent Developments and Challenges in Domestic Violence: Implications for Service and System Design” (March 2011, Nicosia - Cyprus)

TYPE AND MAIN GOALS OF THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:

The training was held in Nicosia-Cyprus, within the framework of the project REACT to Domestic Violence: Building a Support System for Victims of Domestic Violence, funded by the European Commission Daphne III Programme and coordinated by the Legal Informational Centre for NGOs Slovenia-PIC, in partnership with MIGS. The aim of the training was to help improve the inter-departmental (multi-agency) cooperation between the relevant institutions and government agencies and several NGOs/ grass root organisations dealing with domestic violence victims support in Cyprus, and hence to contribute in the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the support system for women victims of domestic violence.

The scope of the project was regional as it was implemented in Cyprus and in Slovenia, but the scope of the particular activity/training was national. The organisation of the professional development training was an initiative by MIGS in close cooperation of an independent state committee dealing with the prevention and combating of domestic violence in Cyprus.

TARGET GROUP(S) AND BENEFICIARIES:

The professionals involved in providing support to victims of domestic violence (Social Welfare Officers, Family Counselors, Health Professionals, Mental Health Services, Non-Governmental Organizations/ grass root organisations, Police Officers and Legal Service officers and other Legal professionals). The indirect beneficiaries of the professional development training are women victims of domestic violence as support receivers.

USE OF CERTAIN METHOD OR METHODS:

The professionals involved in providing support to victims of domestic violence (Social Welfare Officers, Family Counsellors, Health Professionals, Mental Health Services, Non-Governmental Organisations/ grass root organisations, Police Officers and Legal Service officers and other Legal professionals) were brought together and were given the opportunity to learn about the most recent research on domestic violence and to discuss current challenges in relation to the inter-departmental coordination and in the support system to victims of domestic violence. Dr. Marsha Scott was invited as the expert trainer on issues public health, gender based violence and violence against women sectors in the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe for 20

years. Focused on the theoretical framework on domestic violence as a cause and consequence of women's inequality, the trainer used group exercises and encouraged group discussion to provide a more in depth understanding of recent developments in domestic violence: thinking and practice, including (among other), the historical argument around symmetrical versus non-symmetrical violence between partners and ex-partners, older women and domestic violence, the dynamics of coercive control (such as assault, intimidation, isolation, control), assessing risk in providing protection, perpetrator risk assessment, safety assessment with mothers and children, increasing space for action: help-seeking and help giving, domestic violence and children: children's experiences of coercive control, possible effects of power and control tactics on a mother. Participants representing grass root organisations/ NGOs and various state actors shared their experiences and discussed good practices as well as, current challenges in the victim support system. The trainer concluded the session with various paradigms on why a gendered approach on issues of domestic violence is essential. Interdepartmental discussion followed involving all relevant stakeholders, including grass root organisations, sharing their experiences and addressing the gaps in the support system for victims of domestic violence in Cyprus.

INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS:

The event attracted over 50 participants representing the Social Welfare Services, the Health services, the Law Authority, NGOs, and the Police. The project coordinator was invited to various TV and Radio programmes to speak about the results of the event and the outputs of the project activities. MIGs was also invited too the House Committee on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men to present the main results and recommendations of the project activities. The success of this activity lies in the empowered and efficient project leadership taking into account the gender equality perspective and building alliances among state and grass root stakeholders dealing with violence against women, domestic violence as well as, in the visibility and awareness raising achieved through the active involvement of the media.

METHOD USED ELSEWHERE:

In Slovenia the Legal Informational centre for NGOs, implemented a very similar training targeting specifically law professionals, legal practitioners and judiciary. Various European non-governmental and grass roots organisations dealing with gender based violence and the support of victims of violence apply this method of training professionals. The method, if adjusted accordingly, can contribute to combating HRV and FM through the awareness raising and capacity building of professionals (state and non-state) involved in the victim support system. This method is innovative as it can be applied by other grass roots organisations in other European countries, in combating harmful traditional practices through professional training techniques for improving the victim support system and building culturally sensitive and gender sensitive victim support mechanisms.

**AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY
(DESCRIPTION, WEBSITE, ETC):**

Mapping study:

- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/news/new-publication-react-to-domestic-violence/>.

Project leaflets:

- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/news/2670/>.

Event report:

- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/calendar/migs-organizes-professional-development-training-on-e2%80%9crecent-developments-and-challenges-in-domestic-violence-implications-for-service-and-system-design/>.
- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/news/new-publication-react-to-domestic-violence/>.

RESULTS, OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES OF THIS ACTIVITY OR PROJECT:

Project information leaflets and a study mapping the gaps in the victim support system were published and widely disseminated.

EFFECT STUDIES, EVALUATIONS AND ADEQUACY TO HRV AND FM:

This activity was evaluated internally through evaluation questionnaires and received very positive feedback. Such an activity can be adjusted accordingly to address HRV and FM and should be implemented on a systematic basis.

Good practice #4

ORGANISATION:

KISA-Action for Equality, Support and Antiracism (grass roots organisation), and ENAR-Cyprus (European Network against Racism)

TITLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Action Week Against Racism (March 2008, Nicosia - Cyprus)

TYPE AND MAIN GOALS OF THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:

Within the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (21st March) KISA, Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism and ENAR-Cyprus (European Network Against Racism) organised an Action Week against Racism in an effort to stress that combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination against vulnerable groups such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well other cultural or religious groups such as Roma, aiming to change the climate of racism and xenophobia prevalent in Cypriot society.

The scope of the project was national with multiple target groups.

USE OF CERTAIN METHOD OR METHODS:

KISA and ENAR-Cyprus appealed to the state and society to take this opportunity to enter into an open public dialogue between all the people who reside in Cyprus, irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, colour, community, religion, legal status or any other different characteristic. In this dialogue, the voice of people who are vulnerable to racism and discrimination, as well as that of the non-governmental organisations which represent and support them, were raised, so that diversity and respect are recognized as important elements of multiculturalism that enriches Cypriot society. The participation of KISA and ENAR-Cyprus in the European-wide Action Week Against Racism (17 – 23 March 2008) was highlighted by the following activities and events:

1. Photographic Exhibition and distribution of information material against racism
2. Press Conference
3. Presentation of ENAR Shadow Report 2006 on Racism in Cyprus and Europe – Open Discussion
4. Film Screening and Cultural Event with music and dance

This method involved grass roots organisations with a European Network and local university in the implementation of the activities. This contributed to bringing these issues closer to the general public through the press conference and engaging youth.

TARGET GROUP(S) AND BENEFICIARIES:

Cyprus Government, wide public residing in Cyprus.

INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS:

Empowered project leadership as well as community engagement, visibility and awareness raising amongst the public.

METHOD USED ELSEWHERE:

Information not available. However, awareness raising campaigns such as these are essential in changing social attitudes towards migrant communities and may offer the ground for productive dialogues on issues of violence, that also require a culture-sensitive approach.

AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY (DESCRIPTION, WEBSITE, ETC):

- http://www.kisa.org.cy/EN/activities/activities__mobilization/587.html
- http://www.kisa.org.cy/_metacanvas/attach_handler03bb.pdf?attach_id=232&content_type=application/pdf&filename=Action_Week_Flyer.pdf

RESULTS, OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES OF THIS ACTIVITY OR PROJECT:

Awareness raising campaigns such as these are very significant in transmitting multiple anti-racism and human rights messages to multiple stakeholders through the wider public's involvement. The particular series of events served as an opportunity to sensitise society and the state about racism and discrimination that leads to marginalisation, exclusion and violation of the rights of people who are 'different' from the majority. Such activities can help promote an environment where issues such as HRV and FM can be addressed on a grass roots and policy level.

EFFECT STUDIES AND EVALUATIONS:

Official information not available. The project contributed to the prevention and combating of discrimination and racism against migrant communities. The project is dependent on funding, and similar activities are often organised by KISA in Cyprus but also by NGOs active in the field of anti-racism and violence in Europe. The particular series of activities can be applied in various countries in Europe to address harmful traditional practices with the aim to raise awareness and to promote community engagement.

Good practice #5**ORGANISATION:**

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Non-governmental Organisation)

TITLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Perspective: Peer Education Roots for School Pupils to Enhance Consciousness of Tackling and Impeding Women Violence in Europe 2009-2010

TYPE AND MAIN GOALS OF THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:

The project was coordinated by the City of Modena, Italy. The aim of the project was to raise young people's awareness on gender violence and to propose emotional and relationship models based on mutual respect between genders, thus preventing the perpetration of violence in future. The project was funded by the European Commission, Daphne III Programme. The specific objectives of the project were the following:

- To raise the awareness of young people in secondary school on gender-based violence;
- To promote healthy relationship models that are based on mutual respect among young people;
- To test and evaluate a 'peer education' approach in the prevention of gender-based violence by promoting young people's direct involvement in the issues that affect their relationships;
- To strengthen adolescents' active participation in the elaboration of key messages to be used in an information campaign which will address their peers;

- To overcome the perception of gender-based violence as a private matter and instead to report it as a public social problem that needs to be addressed;
- To strengthen the role educational role of schools in promoting relationships based on tolerance, respect, and equality.

USE OF CERTAIN METHOD OR METHODS:

- The organization of ‘peer education’ activities in secondary schools with the aim to promote awareness among youth on gender-based violence;
- Implementation of an awareness raising campaign which using the key messages elaborated by students during the ‘peer education’ activities and which will be addressed to students and the general public;
- Drafting of guidelines for teachers and youth workers on how to replicate the ‘peer education’ activities in their own contexts in both formal and non-formal education. These guidelines were widely disseminated.

TARGET GROUP(S) AND BENEFICIARIES:

50 secondary school students in three secondary schools in Nicosia, Cyprus.

INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS:

The project can be considered an example of good practice for several reasons. Firstly, the use of peer education methodology was an innovative factor that sought to engage students directly in processes to prevent gender-based violence and make a difference in their student community. Furthermore, peer education enables the transferability of knowledge and experience gained by the participants to their peers causing multiplier effects. Young people mentioned that it was easier to learn from peers because they ‘speak the same language as you’, they ‘relate to you’, ‘they can understand you better’, and use ‘language and examples that are relevant to your reality’. Participants felt that peer education was effective because it takes place in an informal setting where they are not ‘subjected to any authority’ or ‘forced’ to listen. Consequently, in this informal setting they felt more comfortable to express themselves freely and talk openly about their experiences. Finally, both girls and boys of this age group need to be engaged in the prevention of violence as this can prevent violence later on in life.

METHOD USED ELSEWHERE:

This project was implemented in Rome/Modena-Italy, Alicante-Spain, Chemnitz-Germany, and Athens-Greece.

Projects that employ the methodology of ‘peer education’ are carried out in several countries as this constitutes a very successful method of training young people on social issues such as gender-based violence. The project is innovative as it allows for adaptability and application elsewhere according to the social context of each country, with potential of receiving comparative data from each country for a joint report.

**AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON THE PROJECT OR ACTIVITY
(DESCRIPTION, WEBSITE, ETC):**

- <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/news/perspective-peer-education-roots-for-school-pupils-to-enhance-consciousness-of-tackling-and-impeding-women-violence-in-europe/>

RESULTS, OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES OF THIS ACTIVITY OR PROJECT:

- Raised awareness among young people in secondary school on gender-based violence;
- Promotion of healthy relationship models that are based on mutual respect among young people;
- Promoted adolescents' active participation in the elaboration of key messages to be used in an information campaign which will address their peers;
- Enhanced educational role of schools in promoting relationships based on tolerance, respect, and equality.

EFFECT STUDIES, EVALUATIONS, ADEQUACY WITH HRV AND FM:

This project ended in 2011. Based on pre and post workshop questionnaires completed by the participating students, the peer education methodology for the prevention of gender based violence is deemed very successful. Young people exhibited high enthusiasm and strong motivation to become peer educators and were eager to share their knowledge and experience with others. Peer educators felt that the trainings provided a unique opportunity for them to do their part in standing up to gender-based violence. The fact that they could take action empowered them and gave them a sense of satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. This activity involved high participation of the target group, and with the appropriate knowledge and skills of the experts/trainers achieved an empowered and effective project implementation.

Although the project contributed to the prevention of gender-based violence in general and not specifically on the prevention of HRV and FM, the method employed can be adjusted to issues of harmful traditional practices. This project can be applied in different countries and can contribute to the prevention of HRV and FM through the active involvement of youth and by involving different stakeholders.

4

CONCLUSIONS

The belief that ‘only blood washes shame’ is deeply rooted in many cultures, but the expression of such a belief varies from society to society. Even in Cyprus, where honour crimes and killings are not recorded as such but as domestic violence cases or homicides, honour plays a significant role within families and communities. Traditional sayings are indicative of how people perceive honour, such as “Gia mia timi zoume” (“We only live for our honour”) and “Para na sou vgi to onoma, kalytera na sou vgi to mati” (“It is better to lose an eye than your name/reputation/honour”). People are deeply affected by their reputation and good standing in the community and often one will hear the phrase “Kai ti tha pei o kosmos” (“What will people say”) (Kninnforum, 2006). The Cypriot press often refer to honour crimes as “Egklimata pathous” (crimes of passion) which sensationalizes and trivializes violence against women by diverting attention from the root causes of violence and the gendered power relations at stake.

‘Honour’ is a way to justify gender inequality in patriarchal societies, normalizing violence against women and girls inside and outside the family. In Cyprus there have been numerous cases where a husband, father, brother, or other male member of a family has committed violent acts against wives, daughters, sisters or even other men in the name of ‘honour’ (Panayiotou, 2005). ‘Honour’ is invoked in the case of socially ‘unacceptable’ sexual relationships and other behaviour that violates traditional gender roles. Honour related violence is a specific form of violence that is normalized and tolerated (if not encouraged) by the extended family and society because it is assumed that the whole family is affected, and not just the perpetrator.

There is no systematic data or research on the prevalence of the forms of violence covered by this study, namely HRV, FM, and abandonment either in the Greek or Turkish Cypriot community. However, according to the participants of the present study, honour-related violence, forced marriage, semi-forced or arranged marriages may take different forms in Cyprus affecting women from all socio-economic backgrounds, with migrant women and LGBT people in a particularly vulnerable position. HRV is largely addressed within the framework of domestic violence and forced marriage is addressed by a number of legal provisions in civil and criminal law, as discussed in previous sections of the present report.

Also important is the lack of data as to the prevalence of violence against women from ethnic minority and migrant communities. Migrant and ethnic minority women are absent from the National Action Plan on Combating Violence in the Family (2010-2015), the National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women, and the National Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals (2010-2012) and no measures are foreseen to combat gender violence in migrant communities. Despite a small Roma population in Cyprus, there is no statistical data or research exploring the prevalence of violence against women including HRV and/or FM despite evidence in other European countries that child marriage and forced marriage is widespread. The Roma are a group that has been systematically discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots communities and are amongst the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. Due to the lack of official data and research there is no evidence that harmful traditional practices such as HRV, FM, abandonment are practiced among migrant communities in Cyprus. However, further research is necessary which would specifically focus on the prevalence of violence against women including forced and/or arranged marriage and honour related violence within ethnic groups in Cyprus.

However, such research must be conducted with particular caution as the conceptualisation of these forms of VAW within the culture of particular communities may enable racist responses to violence against women that target particular communities, whilst taking attention away from the socio-cultural basis of mainstream forms of violence against women. Thus, by contributing to stereotypes about and stigmatizing particular communities such approaches may add to the multiple and intersecting inequalities faced by minority ethnic women, but also inequalities faced by local women.

As Meeto and Mirza (2007) point out:

By looking at the various discourses existing on violence against women, it becomes obvious that by highlighting domestic violence issues that need special cultural sensitivity (especially issues of honour related violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation) in specific cultural and religious ethnic communities, we are at risk of stereotyping these communities as backward and barbaric.

If honour killings and forced marriage as forms of domestic abuse and violence are constructed as ethicised problems by politicians and the media, this can create more multicultural marginalisation and a racist backlash at a local and national level. As Salim (2003) points out “honour related violence must never be seen as a cultural matter, but always as a human rights issue”.

Policy and legislation on gender based violence must encompass a range of forms of violence: domestic violence, sexual assault including rape, sexual harassment, stalking, honour related violence, forced marriage and trafficking. At the same time, governments must take into account the implications of such policies and measures for those groups found at the intersection of multiple inequalities with the aim to reduce further marginalization and stigmatization, while promoting access to services and to legal recourse.

The study revealed strong links between the issue of trafficking in women and forced marriage, suggesting the existence of a different context in which forced marriage may take place. As mentioned in previous sections of the report, the Cyprus police often refer to the penal code in order to handle recent cases of trafficking in women who are forced to marry male third country nationals for the purpose of “marriage of convenience” or “forced marriage”. The fact that the Anti-trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of victims Law 87(I)/ 2007 does not include forced marriage as a form of exploitation of trafficked women seems to be a serious gap in the effective prosecution of such cases and for the protection of women. The police expressed the need for urgent revision of the trafficking law and the inclusion of forced marriage as a form of exploitation, as a newly identified trend in trafficking of women in Cyprus. Concerns from the police also indicate the possibility of a rise in the phenomenon of “wife importing” and/or “mail-order brides”. Thus, this is an area in urgent need of further research and attention from the relevant authorities.

In relation to abandonment, the study revealed that the term is hardly known and even more rarely used by organisations in Cyprus and thus no evidence could be found of its occurrence in the Cyprus context. Further in-depth studies are necessary in order to have a complete picture of the prevalence of abandonment in Cyprus and in relation to other European countries.

Finally, the study identified and elaborated five categories of success factors in successful implementation of projects and activities aiming at combating HRV, FM and abandonment on a grass roots level. The success factors identified include empowered and efficient project leadership, visibility and awareness raising, community engagement, appropriate knowledge and skills amongst experts. The projects and programmes selected as good practices comprise of diverse approaches to combating violence against women in Cyprus including counselling programmes, awareness raising activities, and training, among others.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 GRASS ROOT ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS

- Implement awareness raising campaigns on violence against women, including harmful traditional practices, such as HRV, FGM, FM, engaging the communities;
- Develop information campaigns and programmes targeting women and children to better inform them about their rights;
- Lobby government for more funding for research and outreach programmes, as well for specialized services on HRV and FM.

5.2 NATIONAL POLICY MAKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Conduct systematic research on the prevalence of harmful traditional practices in Cyprus in order to better understand the true dimension of the problem and to better inform policy formulation and implementation;
- Include the issues of HRV, FM, FGM and abandonment in the political agenda on violence against women and address these within the framework of gender inequality and traditional power relations between women and men. This needs to be reflected in the legislative framework and in all actions to prevent and combat violence against women;
- Establish a systematic plan of action for combating all forms of violence against women, that will include awareness raising campaigns through the media and other sources, which will be monitored as to its implementation, regularity, target group and evaluation;

- Enhance cooperation among governmental departments and services as well as cooperation between governmental departments and NGOs;
- NGOs and women's organisations must be systematically consulted in the formulation and implementation of policies and measures to combat all forms of violence against women including HRV, FM, and abandonment;
- Establish crisis centres for women and girls that will provide a range of high quality, comprehensive and coordinated specialized services for women, that are accessible and culturally sensitive including legal assistance, counselling services, psychosocial support, health services, among others;
- A 24-hour helpline for victims of gender based violence must become operational without delay with specialized staff for immediate urgent intervention;
- Organise systematic and specialized training on HRV and FM using a gender-sensitive approach for all frontline officers involved in preventing and combating domestic violence including the police, health professionals, asylum officers, social welfare officers, as well as legal professionals and the judiciary;
- Provide free legal assistance to all women victims of violence including HRV, FGM, FM and abandonment prior and during the legal proceedings;
- Provide greater financial support to women's organisations and NGOs that provide services to victims of violence. The procedures related to the provision of funding must be transparent and be regulated by law;
- Sign/Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which defines and criminalises all forms of male violence against women including HRV, FM, FGM and sexual violence;
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns that are gender sensitive and promote a positive image of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- Acknowledge schools' role in efforts to prevent all forms of gender based violence and promote school based initiatives, involving both educators and students, for raising awareness, promoting the identification of cases, and referral to relevant support services;
- Effectively transpose the Directive 2011/36/EU on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims.
- Ensure that immigration legislation, including on family reunion and labour migration, grant women an independent legal status within maximum one year of their arrival;

- Ensure that access to effective protection is granted to all women independent of their legal status and provide a residence status to all third-country nationals survivors of violence against women.
- 5.3 EU policy makers:
 - Develop a European Strategy for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, including HRV and FM, by establishing a general framework of common principles and appropriate instruments;
 - Ensure sufficient EU funding to address equality between women and men and combating violence against women in the European Multi-Annual Framework 2014-2020;
 - Make sure that the Directive on victims' rights includes a gender perspective in all provisions and recognizes violence against women as a specific crime
 - Ask Member States to develop national action plans on all forms of male violence against women, deliver legal instruments, establish data collection, develop awareness raising and education activities, strengthen support to women's organisations, and implement gender budgeting.
- Deliver legal instruments, including a European Directive on all forms of male violence against women;
- Ensure the rights of women asylum seekers to access asylum determination processes and the recognition of the gender specific nature of persecution, on the basis of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Gender Guidelines on International Protection and on the UNHCR's Guidance Note on refugees' claims relating to sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on combating all Forms of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

6

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- Cyprus House of Representatives <http://www.parliament.cy/parliamentgr/home.htm>
- European Industrial Relations Observatory Online <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>
- European Women's Lobby www.womenlobby.org
- KISA - ACTION FOR EQUALITY, SUPPORT, ANTIRACISM www.kisa.org.cy
- Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) www.medinstgenderstudies.org
- Women against Violence in Europe www.wave-network.org

- Office of the Attorney General http://www.law.gov.cy/law/lawoffice.nsf/dmlindex_gr/dmlindex_gr?OpenDocument
- HFC “Hope For Children” UNCRC Policy Center <http://www.uncrcpc.org/node/1>

7 ANNEXES

Participating Organizations:

Turkish Cypriot Organizations:

KAYAD COMMUNITY CENTRE:

KAYAD is a women's organization working in the field of community development in North Cyprus. Established in 1997, KAYAD Community Centre, which is the first of its kind in Northern Cyprus, has been active since 2001, with the aim to strengthen grass-roots through empowering women, strengthening families, providing skills to youth and increasing awareness on vital issues for sustainable development. The Community Center offers lectures seminars, workshops, group support, guidance coaching and advocacy. The objectives of KAYAD include: a) Raising awareness in human rights, b) Strengthening women's position in society, c) Understanding and working for international peace, d) Working to establish ethical and moral values in society.

CMIRS CENTRE FOR MIGRATION, IDENTITY AND RIGHTS STUDIES

The Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) is a not for profit company based in northern part of Cyprus, operating island-wide on migration, identity and rights issues through research, surveys and evidence based actions.

Greek Cypriot organizations:

UNHCR CYPRUS

The UNHCR Representation in Cyprus operating since August 1974, at the request of UN Secretary General, immediately after the tragic events on the island that led to the uprooting of thousands of people. Today, UNHCR works with the government, NGOs and other agencies and organizations to ensure the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and all persons within the mandate of UNHCR. It also seeks to inform and sensitize public opinion about the refugee issue in order to create a climate of tolerance and respect for the rights of refugees. Until January 1st 2002, the UNHCR was responsible for the review of asylum applications on behalf of the Cyprus Government. This responsibility passed to the Cyprus Government, so today the asylum applications submitted and considered by the Asylum Service in the first degree, and by the Reviewing Authority, in the second degree. For more information please visit: <http://www.unhcr.org.cy/>.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION AND HANDLING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family was founded on the 25th of July 1990 in Nicosia. The Association is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that since its foundation is trying to promote effective solutions and programmes to the problem of domestic violence. For more information please visit: www.domviolence.org.cy.

FUTURE WORLDS CENTRE:

Future Worlds Center is a non-profit, non-governmental organization registered in Cyprus on November 6 of 1991. It launched its activities in 1993 as Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Institute. Between 1994 and 1999 it expanded its aims hosting a number of peace-promoting and social entrepreneurial projects. It was re-structured in 2000 modifying its original Constitution to embrace projects aiming in the development of an active civil society in Cyprus, as well as projects with international scope, especially those that involve the application of technology towards bridging the literacy, economic and digital divides (Development and IT Education). At the end of 2005, it evolved into a larger organization with a pure international orientation integrating all its activities under the umbrella Future Worlds Center. To learn more about the organization, we invite you to visit http://www.futureworldscenter.org/website/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2&lang=en.

HOPE FOR CHILDREN:

The HFC “Hope for Children”– UNCRC Policy Center (Previously known as HFC “Hope For Children” Office for Children’s Rights) is an non-profit independent institution based in Nicosia, Cyprus. Our institution works on humanitarian and development policy relevant to the defence and promotion of children’s rights. It does so through research, grassroots programme design and implementation and advisory services offered to governments and international organizations. It is founded on the principle of promoting and protecting children’s rights in Cyprus. We aim to do this through implementation of a variety of projects covering bi-communal initiatives, environmental initiatives, integration of legally residing non-Cypriot children nationals into their host society, working with separated and unaccompanied children present in Cyprus. More information can be accessed at <http://www.uncrcpc.org/node/2>.

Partner Organizations

The project Flying Team against Violence – Combating Honour Related Violence and Forced Marriages, funded by the European Commission Daphne III Programme, is coordinated by the Social Development Organisation MOVISIE International (Netherlands), in partnership with:

- ALMAeuropa (Sweden)
- Bağımsız Kadın Derneği/Autonomous Women’s Association (Turkey)
- Foundation Welsaen (Netherlands)
- Foundation Kezban (Netherlands)
- Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) (Cyprus)
- Papatya/Türkisch-Deutscher Frauenverein (Germany)

