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# Fempower

Magazine published by the European Info Centre Against Violence / WAVE Office – a DAPHNE Programme Project

## FOCUS

**Women from Ethnic Minorities**

## NGO ACTIVITIES

**Domestic Violence Policy in Hungary**

## LEGAL ISSUES

**Slovakian Law on Domestic Violence**

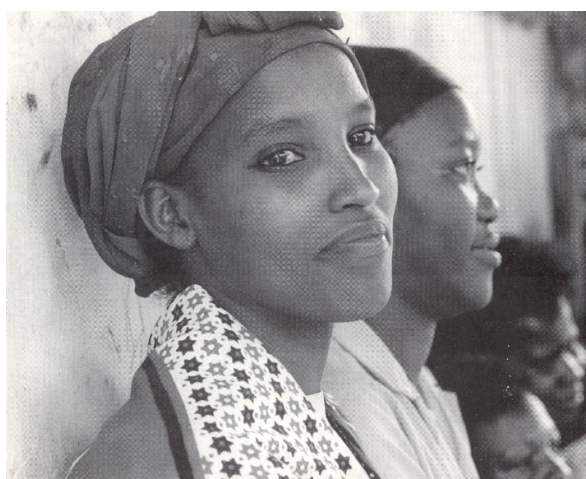
## READING SUGGESTIONS

## FOCUS

**Domestic Violence and Women from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities:**

**Some Issues and Implication for Domestic Violence Services**

By Dr. Ravi K. Thiara



Domestic violence (DV) as an issue has received greater government and public attention in recent years, giving an added voice to Women's Aid and women's organisations who have committedly campaigned around violence against women and children for the last three decades. Equally, attention has again focused on issues of racism and race equality in a European context where racialised discourse around refugees and asylum seekers has become common place. Both of these separate debates converge and have pertinence for any discussion on domestic violence and the experiences of women from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.



Editorial page 2

## FOCUS

Domestic Violence and Women from  
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities  
By Dr. Ravi K. Thiara page 1,3,4

Web Tipps, Study, Conference page 5

## NGO ACTIVITIES

Historical times in Hungary regarding  
Domestic Violence Policy  
By Gyorgyi Tóth page 6,7,8

## NEW VIDEO

Believe Me page 8

## LEGAL ISSUES

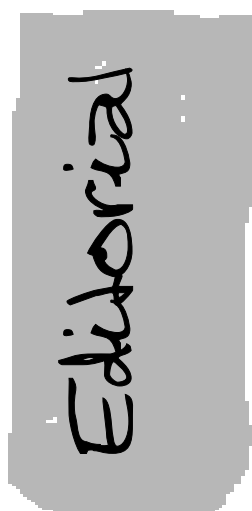
Dear Judges, we have new laws...!  
By Katarina Farkasová page 9,10,11

## READING SUGGESTIONS

Violent Men May Change (Themselves)  
page 12

Women's Organisations in South  
Caucasus page 12

Publisher: WAVE-Office /  
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Site web: <http://www.wave-network.org>  
Translation: Paul Catty  
Layout: Marinela Vecerik  
Design: Pia Moest  
Cover picture: Horizont 3000  
Print: Telekopie – Austria



Male violence against women from ethnic minorities is the focus of the present issue of Fempower. It proved to be a difficult topic. We requested the major European networks working in the field of minority support and the promotion of minority rights to submit articles, but there was precious little response. One reason may well be that the problem of domestic violence is a taboo at the best of times, and within social groups suffering from constant discrimination discussion of the subject tends to be avoided as far as possible. We would be gratified if the publication of the present issue prompted organisations and researchers to contact us and tell us about their approach to supporting women from ethnic minorities who are subjected to male violence and to share their insights on prevention.

Two fairly detailed reports on endeavours to prevent domestic violence in Hungary and in Slovakia afford an insight into the difficulties with which women activists have to contend in asserting women's rights in the new democracies.

**New publications round off this – somewhat belated – issue of Fempower.**

The Editors



In this article, I largely draw on the findings of a national research project commissioned by Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE) to explore the needs and experiences of Black<sup>1</sup> women and children using refuge support services in England<sup>ii</sup> to raise some issues in relation to DV and BME women and their implications for the practice of DV services.

### Equality and diversity

In England, 40 of the approximately 240 refuge support services are specialist refuges striving to meet the needs of differing groups of BME women and children. Despite increasing numbers of BME women accessing DV services, research shows that the success of such services in ensuring a woman-centred environment has not been mirrored in the area of race equality. Given that many groups of BME women are still under-using DV services and experiencing racism in mainstream services which are not sensitive to their cultural, religious and other needs, the challenge of ensuring equality for all service users remains unmet and something that needs to be considered by all working in the DV sector.

Research shows that despite having equal opportunities policies in place, implementation is often weak and few services in the study were able to provide details of how they created a safe environment for BME women and children. Of concern also was the 'colour-blind' approach adopted by many workers who stated that *'we treat all women alike regardless of culture'* - reducing racism to culture was something that was commonly done by many services. Some services also considered anti-racism as being of little concern to them because BME women did not use their services. These issues clearly have implications for the development of good practice within DV services.

It is important to highlight that an emphasis on diversity alone (though an important step) does not ensure equality for women and children from BME groups. Ensuring equality requires a more proactive look at every aspect of the service, from employment practices right through to service delivery. Similarly, when working to ensure diversity, it is important not to make assumptions about or homogenise groups but recognise the complex and multiple needs of a changing population - for instance, the needs of a

South Asian woman born in the UK are likely to be somewhat different from those of a woman born and raised in the sub-continent. Equally, the needs of different groups are likely to shift and change and it is important to reflect this fluidity in service responses which can build sensitivity by consulting and involving BME women and children rather than making assumptions about them.

### Specific needs of BME women

While recognising that the BME groups encountered by DV services will vary depending on country and locality, the research highlighted a number of issues about the needs of BME women that are important to consider in service responses.

High level of support - for a range of reasons BME women require a high level of support over a longer period of time. This can include mediation with statutory agencies, interpreting, and specialist counselling.

Immigration law and absence of settled immigration status - continues to impact particularly viciously on the lives and choices of BME women. It can often determine whether a woman actually seeks help as well as shape the service response that she receives - many refuge services in England have to discriminate against some women due to their immigration status. This issue is of increasing relevance in most European countries with refugee and asylum seeker populations - however it was found in England that many DV workers are uninformed about the issues faced by refugee women.

Additional options - despite refuges research shows that many women prefer to stay in the community and receive help for DV<sup>i</sup> The role of outreach services has been especially crucial for BME women who are more likely to under-use refuge support services. They are also likely to have a low level of awareness/knowledge about the existence of refuges services and thus likely to endure violence for longer periods.

Dual problem - many BME women face the dual problem of racism (from other residents and workers in refuges, in localities while living in refuge or when re-housed, children faced racism in schools) and rejection from their own communities (led to further isolation making it harder to re-build their lives).





Children - are a big factor for most women when deciding to stay or leave in a violent relationship. For BME women this is further accentuated as leaving can often mean cutting links with the wider family and other positive community networks. Children from mixed parentage backgrounds have specific needs around identity work as well as awareness raising with mothers because of negative references to 'black' fathers.

Religion and culture - sensitivity to their religious and cultural practices can make a considerable difference to the quality of the experience that BME women have and often dictates whether they stay or return to violence. The development of links by DV services with supportive BME community groups/organisations was also viewed very positively.

BME staff - the employment of BME staff is of great importance to women and can lead to a rise in the number of enquiries/referrals by and of women from similar backgrounds.

#### Concluding comments

It is important to remember that receiving an appropriate and supportive response is critical to women leaving and staying away from an abusive relationship. All too often women from BME groups continue to

receive an inconsistent service (lack of understanding, stereotypes, assumptions) when approaching services for help. Supporting BME women in sensitive ways may pose a challenge to deeply entrenched beliefs. However, if services are to enable women to make their own choices, then it is the responsibility of all in the DV sector to scrutinise practice with honesty, inform themselves, reach out, listen to, and work *with* BME women and children in building good practice.

<sup>i</sup>'Black' Primarily refers to women of African, African-Caribbean and Asian origin. This in no way assumes that the lives, experiences and needs of black women are uniform but recognises that there are some experiences, such as racism, that are common to all.

<sup>ii</sup>For a full report see D.K.Rai and R.K.Thiara (1997) *Re-defining Spaces: the needs of Black women and children in refuge support services and Black workers in Women's Aid, WAFE, Bristol.*

<sup>iii</sup>For a discussion of the role of outreach services, see C. Humphreys and R.K.Thiara (2001) *Routes to Safety: protection issues facing abused women and children and the role of outreach services*, WAFE, Bristol.

Dr. Ravi K. Thiara is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Safety and Well-Being in the School of Health and Social Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK. She has carried out research into various aspects of domestic violence over the past 7 years. She has worked with both statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to assist in the development of good practice around domestic violence and equalities issues. She is currently working on an action research project entitled 'Talking to My Mum' which seeks to develop materials to build communication between children and their mothers in the context of domestic violence.

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## Web Tips

<http://errc.org>

The ERRC monitors the human rights situation of Roma in Europe, provides and supports legal services, and publishes information on the situation of Roma in various countries.

[www.formidlingscentret.dk](http://www.formidlingscentret.dk)

Here you can find the summary of the survey "Women from ethnic minorities at crisis centres in Denmark".

[www.romawomen.org](http://www.romawomen.org)

International Roma Women's Network (IRWN)

The IRWN brings together women activists representing Roma, Sinti, Gypsies, and the Travellers from Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Roma women from eighteen countries launched the new network on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8) to lobby governments for better living conditions and to fight for Roma women's rights.

[www.scas.acad.bg/WFM/](http://www.scas.acad.bg/WFM/)

Young Women from Minorities (WFM) is a European non-governmental organisation whose major aim is to bring together and promote the work undertaken by and for minority young women's projects in Europe.

## Study

The most detailed study to date of violence against Roma women was published by the Refugee Women's Resource Project in March 2002. Entitled "Romani Women from Central and Eastern Europe - A Fourth World, or Experience of Multiple Discrimination", it deals with the various forms of violence to which women belonging to the Roma ethnic group in countries of the region are exposed, but also with the cultural and social background. Taking the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania as examples, the study clearly documents the process by which racism and xenophobia exacerbate the extent of violence against women and its impact.

Refugee Women's Resource Project / Asylum Aid

Romani Women from Central and Eastern Europe - A Fourth World, or Experience of Multiple Discrimination, March 2002

Contact: 28, Commercial St, London E1 6LS, England

phone: ++44 20 7377 5123

fax: ++44 20 7247 7789

e-mail: [info@asylumaid.org](mailto:info@asylumaid.org); [rwrp2000@hotmail.com](mailto:rwrp2000@hotmail.com)

Homepage: <http://www.asylumaid.org.uk>

## Conference

WFM

Young Women from Minorities

Social Exclusion and Minority Women's Health

Study session in co-operation with the European Youth Centre Budapest

Budapest, Hungary, May 11-18, 2003

The aim of this study session is to empower young minority women in regard to their health and to raise awareness of the link between social exclusion and health.

Further information: WFM C/O Centro Interculturale di giovani migranti e native

ALOUAN

Via Reiss Romoli

10148 TORINO, Italy

e-mail: [studysessionbudapest@libero.it](mailto:studysessionbudapest@libero.it)

## Historical times in Hungary regarding domestic violence policy

The 8-year-long work of NANE and other NGOs has created a breakthrough at last in Hungary regarding governmental attitudes to domestic violence.

By Györgyi Tóth

NANE Women's Rights Association, a grassroots women's NGO based on feminist principles and a founding member of WAVE, started its activities back in 1994 by opening the first and still only Hungarian hotline for battered women and children. Since the beginnings, which saw both private attacks coming in through the hotline and public attacks through the media (critics claimed that we denied traditional values and destroyed families), there were always strong feelings regarding our work. Violence against women and children is an issue where staying neutral is just not possible.

### Activities of NANE

Accompanied by both support and attacks, NANE has broadened its activities in the last few years, driven by the insight that we need to develop capacities with stronger multiplying effects for intervention and prevention than is possible with the one-to-one method through the hotline. We have developed a whole range of information materials which we are circulating on all possible occasions, we offer training possibilities to professional groups from visiting nurses through social workers to police officers, we carry out lobbying activities regarding legislative changes or suggest reforms to outdated laws that reflect Victorian ethics and morals rather than the reality of victims, we plan a series of books on violence and feminism-related topics, and we have opened a highly informative website.

The results of these first eight years of activity could be described as follows: a growing public awareness regarding violence against women, a growing awareness among battered women regarding their situation, a growing awareness among professional groups regarding this topic, and a change of rhetoric in politics: in the last few years, although little was done politically, not even conservative politicians – formerly leading the public rhetoric about NANE destroying families by supporting battered women and children – could deny the existence and realities of domestic violence. The last few

years also included non-governmental development in the area, although very little and still very centralized: an NGO called HCM (*Habeas Corpus Working Group*) founded in 1996 to defend the right to physical self-determination, which originally started out defending the rights of sexual minorities, has enlarged its profile to include support for abused women and children, as in their understanding it is the two sides of the same coin whether you are harassed for engaging in consensual sex or your rights are ignored when you are forced to have sex or forced to live with somebody against your will. A law professor with whom NANE has maintained professional contacts ever since our operations have started has established a research and training foundation on women's and children's rights.

This is in brief the background of the recent and rapid developments of last autumn in Hungary. As you will see, some coincidences have initiated the events, but without the hard work of the previous eight years, nothing on this scale could have been achieved.

### The murder of a child

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 2002 a 12-year-old boy became the victim of a vicious, pre-mediated murder by his father. Up to the point of the murder the story is a completely typical



Hungarian story of domestic violence. Woman and child live with a very violent husband who is finally sentenced to six years in prison for criminal behavior towards male strangers. During his time in prison the woman finally plucks up the courage to divorce him, and they start a new life. The years in prison end, however, and the abuser carries on where he stopped at the time of his imprisonment. Ignoring the fact that she has divorced him for his violent behavior, he moves back in to terrorize his family. All along the authorities are active only to the extent that they make the woman responsible for the situation of the children. One day, however, the woman manages to escape with her two children. She leaves her own home behind to live in peace in a rented flat. As her ex-husband does not have a job, however, she has to earn enough money to pay for the house in which the batterer lives, for the small flat she lives in with the two children, and living costs for ALL, including the abuser who demands regular financial support from the woman in order to leave her and the children alone. The boy of 12, who is the son of the abuser, keeps contact with his father. He feels sorry for him living all alone now in the house and visits him regularly... The child protection authorities are also positive about the developments: the mother has "solved" the problem of endangering minors by giving up her own house and earning an income for two children, herself and a blackmailing ex-spouse, and the biological child keeps in touch, since children must have contact with their fathers...

Unfortunately, the father, being a batterer, is not satisfied with the situation, because it leaves him only limited control over the family. His plan now is to take final revenge on the woman who left him, fully knowing that worse than death for her would be to see her child murdered. As could be seen later, he planned the murder of their child several weeks in advance, preparing the meat axe, arranging the occasion. And so it happened that early in September 2002 another innocent victim had to die as a result of the political and institutional silence and vacuum that surrounds domestic violence in Hungary.

#### **Strong responses**

This case has brought a very strong public response, and NANE, the research foundation and HCM decided to launch a signature campaign addressing key political leaders to establish a national domestic violence policy which reflects the reality of victims and at the same time complies with our international obligations. To a large extent it means a change of attitudes in the area of implementing existing laws; the rest is legislation, including the currently non-existent categories of stalking protection to the victims.

In our opinion it is extremely important to maintain a healthy balance of legislative changes and changes in attitudes. There are two dangerous extremes that we will have to watch out for: the government only enacts legislative changes but does not ensure their implementation by training courses and changes in attitude. During certain visits we have also seen the tendency only to deal with attitudes as "the Hungarian laws are appropriate". Both types of change would look very good in the eyes of the international community when it comes to reporting the obligations of the Hungarian government. However, our delegations have stressed on all occasion that *results* can only be achieved if neither aspect is neglected.

#### **Follow-up**

NANE and the other NGOs intend to keep the topic in the news beyond the sensation of the few horrific cases that have caught the attention of the media. The first concrete political steps are under way: by the time this article appears the MPs will have debated a Parliamentary Resolution which would oblige the government to launch an inter-ministerial policy regarding domestic violence. The Ministry for Children, Youth and Sports intends to coordinate an education campaign against domestic violence with the involvement of NGOs, other ministries, government institutions and an independent filmmaker. These are very important first steps, and we will use our voices to make sure that these are not the last as well.



V

Some results are already quite visible: the issue of domestic violence has reached a new level in public and political discourse, with a strong mainstreaming effect in evidence. The campaign brought immense free publicity, and the signature campaign itself had a strong organizing force within communities all over the country. People who have

volunteered to collect signatures in their neighborhood suddenly became women's rights advocates in the course of explaining to their friends, relatives and acquaintances about the campaign. All in all, the genie of social change has been let out of the bottle, and there is no way it can be forced back.



Györgyi Toth works with Nane, Women's Rights Assosiation Budapest  
For further Information, go to <http://www.nane.hu>



## Believe Me

### New video from the Leeds Animation Workshop on sexual violence against children

Sexual violence against children is the topic of the new video from the Leeds Animation Workshop. In the 12-minute film five young people narrate their stories of abuse. As always with the very thoughtful productions by these British animated film makers, the stories have a conciliatory ending without lapsing into escapism. The film conveys an important message for children, whether or not they have been directly subjected to abuse: "Sexual abuse can happen to children from all kinds of backgrounds; if it does happen it is never their fault; it is okay to have mixed feelings about the abuser – and there are some 'secrets' which should never be kept."

"Believe Me" is targeted primarily at 9 to 13-year-olds, who should watch it together with a teacher or youth worker. It is also suitable for therapy sessions and for training professionals working with children (who may be the victims of abuse).

The video was produced under the auspices of the DAPHNE Project. It is also available in German and Spanish and can be ordered from:

- Leeds Animation Workshop, 45 Bayswater Row, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS8 5LF, England, phone/fax: ++44-113-2484997, e-mail: [law@leedanimation.demon.co.uk](mailto:law@leedanimation.demon.co.uk) (English)
- Informationsstelle gegen Gewalt, Bacherplatz 10/4, 1050 Vienna, Austria, phone: ++43-1-5440820, fax: ++43-1-5440820/24, e-mail: [informationsstelle@aoef.at](mailto:informationsstelle@aoef.at) or
- Wildwasser ev, Berlin (contact Katherina Larondelle), e-mail: [wildwasserberlin@compuserve.de](mailto:wildwasserberlin@compuserve.de) (German)
- Fundacion Mujeres (contact person Marta Ferreyra), e-mail: [internacional@fundacionmujeres.es](mailto:internacional@fundacionmujeres.es) (Spanish)



## Dear Judges, we have new laws ...!

A paper delivered before judges and state prosecutors from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary during the seminar "Laws on domestic violence", organized by the Canadian Ministry of Justice at Trenianske Teplice, Slovakia, Nov. 28, 2002

By Katarína Farkasová, M.A.

### New amendments on domestic violence

In June 2002, all the MP caucuses in the Slovak Parliament approved the draft amendment to several legal regulations to deal with domestic violence. The amendment was drafted by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Alliance of Women in Slovakia, especially JUDR. Magurová (on the basis of the analysis of the Slovak legislation prepared by experts – lawyers of the AWS as part of the AWS project AdvoCats for Women), and Dr. Iveta Rajtáková and some already existing proposals of Dr. Eva Sopková of Pro Familia). The draft also included some proposals made by the National Association of Women Judges in Slovakia (NASS) that had been submitted to Parliament, but later withdrawn, by MP Eva Rusnáková.

The adoption of the amendments to the laws (amendments to the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, the Law on Minor Offences, the Law on Damages to Victims of Violent Criminal Offences, the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code) is a manifestation of the relative progress achieved in Slovakia in relation to the elimination of domestic violence. Some of those amendments only became effective on 1 September, 2002, others on 1 January, 2003, so it is still too early to evaluate their real impact in practice. Although many colleagues of ours from the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary envy us those laws, two fundamental questions arise in relation to them: First, will these laws be good enough, will they be adequately extensive? We do not know the answer yet. That is what we are going to monitor. However, we do know that if they are not good and

extensive enough, we will try to amend them again. And the second question is – will they be implemented in practice?

### Obstacles for victims

Our clients contact us after many assaults from their partners, after many years of suffering in the relationship with him. On average, they contact the police after being assaulted thirty-five times (Yorkshire police statistics), after 5 – 13 years (various sources) but also because their children are growing older and the women are worried that the children might assault the abuser. The women come to us asking for help. First of all, we needed to stop the violence, to ensure safety for the victim. We would be happiest if Slovakia had a law similar to that in Austria, where a police officer can take the abuser out of the house and prohibit him from coming back home, regardless of the right of ownership.

Unfortunately, our efforts to amend the law on the police force failed, but we are continuing to work on its amendments in an international team, with the support of Austrian experts, to ensure that a police officer can put an end to violence on the spot where it is happening, expel the abuser from the house, i.e. the place of violence, thus safeguarding the safety of the victim (just as it can be done in public places, such as a pub: a violent person is taken out and –paradoxically – taken home to his family).

I find it important to remind you that even before the adoption of the amendments there

was a law allowing police officers to take the abuser away from the house, even the abuser's own house, and keep him in custody for up to 24 hours. However, the implementation of this legal provision has been very rare, and it would be great if the police started using it in practice much more frequently and efficiently. It is the human factor on the side of police officers. Another thing that made it difficult for our clients was that they were required to give approval with the prosecution of the abuser in the event that the abuser was their family member. Therefore we proposed changing the law so that such approval is not required any more. We will be happy to see that the police officers realize this change too. Even though the police procedures have been changed (in response to the new law), it will be interesting to see how it is carried out in practice. Again, it is the human factor of the police officers.

Cases of our clients show, and statistics confirm (and so do all studies on violence against women published in other countries), that the rate of violence starts rising as soon as a woman takes the first steps against the abuser. For example, when she looks for professional assistance. When she gets divorced but has no other place to live and has to remain with the abuser under the same roof, her life is endangered five times more than before.

Therefore, the categories of close persons and persons in custody have been enlarged, now including also former close persons and former persons in custody, so that a family now includes not only relatives in the first line, an adoptive parent, adopted child, siblings and a spouse, but also a former spouse, a common-law spouse, a former common-law spouse, a parent of a child in common, a person who is a close person in relation to them, or a relative in the direct line, an adoptive parent, an adopted child, a sibling, a spouse, or a person that lives, or lived, in the common household).

Another issue we were confronted with was that there was an unwritten law in effect before the amendments that violence was considered a criminal offence only if the victim had a medical certificate for at least seven days of sick leave. You must have seen women beaten so much that they are not able to go to work for seven days. Such was the reality in which it was enough that a doctor prescribed a victim only six days of sick leave and the violence was basically not punishable.

### Forms of violence

Even worse was the situation with violence that could not be seen, such as economic, sexual or psychological violence. We are very happy that the latest legislation includes all these categories of violence (even though we had concerns about naming all of them, because you cannot really name everything). So today the punishable offences include not only beating, kicking, hitting, punching, causing burns of any kind, but also humiliating, treating with contempt, stalking, making threats, inciting fear or stress, forced isolation, emotional blackmail or any other behaviour constituting a threat to the physical or psychological well-being or safety of the victim. Criminal offences are also denying access to food, relaxation, sleep, or denying basic personal care, clothing and hygiene needs, health care, housing, upbringing or education, forcing to beg or to perform activities requiring inappropriate physical or psychological strain with regard to the victim's age or physical condition, exposure to harmful substances, or unjustified denying of access to property that the victim has the right to use and enjoy. This is the greatest change, and its implementation depends on the judges. They will be those who diagnose and classify violence. You may need assistance of more expert witnesses, you may need to do a lot of studying, but mainly, you will need a lot of courage.

### Housing

Another issue that for a long time prevented us from providing efficient assistance to women was the housing issue. When working on the amendment to the laws allowing for taking the abuser away from his house in October, we did not yet know that amendments to the Law on the Police Force would not be included in the package of amendments. The fact that, starting in January, the court may decide within seven days to temporarily limit the abuser's access to his own house for the benefit of the victim who can remain at home, is a poor comfort to us. But even such a small achievement for the sake of women's safety brings us joy, and we are looking forward to seeing it implemented from the start of the next year. If a marriage is divorced because of violence, the victim of that violence will not be obliged to provide substitute accommodation to the abuser. Again, it is up to the human factor, up to the judges to implement that.

## Awareness-raising

We had to keep explaining to MP caucuses what the causes and consequences of violence against women are, in all their complexity. We had to tell them about the superiority of the constitutional right to a safe and violence-free life over the title to property. Actually, the situation remains unchanged even after the amendments; it will only be possible to temporarily limit the use of private property. The President of the Slovak Republic refused to sign the draft amendment to the Civil Code, suggesting that the right to use private property should only be limited for "an adequate substitute". The Alliance of Women called a press conference to draw attention of the public to this proposal of the President and explain that the President misunderstands the position of victims of domestic violence. Our initiative was later followed by similar initiatives by the NASS. Luckily, members of Parliament did not adopt the President's proposal and re-passed the amendment to the Civil Code without the President's proposal. Congratulations to the MPs! It is up to every single judge whether he/she decides for the benefit of the victim and when the decision is made during that seven-day period – whether the judge decides immediately or exposes the woman to further danger during the week of waiting. If the police officers kept the abuser in custody for 24 hours and the judge decided within the same time about limiting the abuser's access to his house, many women's lives could be saved.

A number of our clients decided to bring their cases before a judge. And it was not an easy decision for them to take. It required a lot of courage. However, the judge would keep ordering new hearings over and over, as if unaware that the woman is literally a prisoner of her abuser – according to the court rules, that is how we have to proceed. However, abusers very rarely want to get divorced. After all, why would anyone voluntarily want to be deprived of a part of their property and their pleasure? And judges often play into their hands, by penalizing them only after the second offence, summoning them after the third time, etc. It is not usual to get fined for contempt of court, for not respecting court orders, such as a temporary measure of protection. Judges tend to believe the man rather than the woman, because the man looks more convincing. And it is easier to believe a man than to accept the fact that men abuse women and the world is patriarchal. Yes, this element of feminism is necessary for the elimination of

gender-based violence. Let us read the UN Declaration of Human Rights, if we want to understand abuse. It says literally that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

We would like to provide information to judges about what cannot be seen in a courtroom, about the real position of women whose destiny is in the hands of judges, about their suffering, about the danger they live in and the conditions their children are growing up in. How can we convey to you that you are the only state institution that can help them in Slovakia, because there are no institutions providing paid services, there are no shelters, no social housing for those women, we still do not have the support that we had been promised before the elections. Neither can we advise how a woman, after getting rid of the abuser after all, can also get out of poverty and stand on her own feet (85% of all those who receive social assistance are single mothers with children).

Yes, we are aware, sometimes you feel responsible for the victim's future – you are aware that she has no place to go and no finances to live on and that your decision can be jeopardizing her. We can assure you that we will talk to all the professionals who deal with gender-based violence and try to train them too.

But at the very beginning women victims of gender-based violence have only two institutions to turn to: us, women's NGOs, and you, judges. And that is why we have the responsibility. Let us try to do all we can to make as many as possible responsible.

Questions and Comments to :

Alliance of Women in Slovakia  
Contact: Katarina Farkasova  
E-mail: [aliancia.zien@internet.sk](mailto:aliancia.zien@internet.sk)

## Violent Men May Change (Themselves)

*The first specialist study in German with a fully elaborated Training Programme*

The aim of this publication is to show what a social training programme for men is and what function it can perform within a network of intervention against domestic violence. One of the two authors is Rosa Logar, who heads the Vienna Intervention centre.

The specialist publication "Violent Men May Change (Themselves)" provides the first fully elaborated training Programme in German. It is preceded by four articles dealing with current insights and experience in the field of intervention work and perpetrator measures. The authors offer a survey of the background conditions and requirements for implementing the programme, elucidate theoretical considerations applicable to prevention work, and investigate the success of perpetrator programmes. In so doing they provide important foundations and valuable experience for working with the Social Training Programme. The articles come from Germany, Austria and Switzerland – the co-operative nature of the publication reflecting the co-operation that exists in the field of "intervention projects against domestic violence". Since the first meeting of the three countries' intervention projects in Gladbeck in June 1996, the fruitful exchange of views among some twenty such projects has been taking place on an annual basis. In the book Rosa Logar introduces the Protection Against Violence Act which came into force in Austria in 1997.

Rosa Logar/Ute Rösemann/  
Urs Zürcher (Ed.):  
Gewalttätige Männer ändern (sich)  
Rahmenbedingungen und Handbuch für ein soziales Trainingsprogramm,  
Verlag Haupt  
ISBN 3-258-06395-8

## Women's Organisations in the South Caucasus

Helen Rusetskaia

In December 2002 the Women's Information Centre published a catalogue on women's organisations in the South Caucasus. It includes the contact data for 296 organizations and branches, and information about networks and coalitions.

The catalogue will promote the creation of a uniform information space and will help organisations working on women's issues and interested persons to find partners and to develop cooperation on the regional level.

The catalogue also provides services to journalists in elucidating gender questions and the position of women in the South Caucasus.

The catalogue would be helpful for international organisations working on related issues which are interested in developing collaboration with the South Caucasus republics. Based on the information that is provided in the catalogue, they can improve cooperation and further develop the women's global movement.

The catalogue can be ordered from the Women's Information Centre  
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