



Coordination Action on Human Rights Violations

Evaluating agencies and good practice on domestic violence, rape and sexual assault

Major findings

The Co-ordination Action on Human Rights Violations (CAHRV, 2004–2006) is a broad-based collaboration between research institutions, policy networks, and individual researchers and funded through the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme. CAHRV focuses on interpersonal violence, centred conceptually and strategically within a human rights discourse, with the aims of integrating relevant strands of research. By comparing national representative studies across Europe, CAHRV confirms that violence against women remains a major problem affecting the lives of one quarter to one third of all women in European countries¹.

Within this project, a systematic overview of research on the successes and failures of policy and professional practice of statutory and NGO agencies has just been completed². Cross national analysis³ of the scientific evidence on good practices in service provision and interventions has yielded findings that are relevant for policy and practice. Existing evaluation knowledge highlights specific services, conditions and modes of intervening in gender based violence that support good practice. The results will be discussed in the final report of the CAHRV project, due in May 2007; reports assessing legal frameworks, intervention and service provision have been published on the project website. The major findings on agency good practice are:

¹ See publications at www.cahrv.uni-osnabrueck.de

² Hanmer, J. and Gloor, D. *et al.* (2007) *Agencies and evaluation of good practice: domestic violence rape and sexual assault*, CAHRV.

A companion report focuses on the intersections between criminal, civil and family law in response to gender-based violence. Humphreys, C. and Carter, R. *et al.* (2006) *The justice system as an arena for the protection of human rights for women and children*, CAHRV, evaluates law and criminal prosecution services in selected European Union countries.

³ Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK.

Support, counselling, refuges, for women and children

Evaluation research shows the importance of women-centred NGOs in responding to domestic violence, rape and sexual assault. NGOs led the way through the provision of locally based refuges for women and children, help lines, counselling and support to state recognition and improved statutory services providing civil and criminal remedies, physical and mental health, income support and child protection. Protecting women and their children are closely related. Even when established a decade or more earlier, NGOs remain a vital component for the development of good practice and its continuation in statutory agencies. NGOs provide supportive structures through accommodation, outreach, counselling and accompanying services to meet the needs of different victimised groups. Counselling services prove to be most adequate and effective responses to those who are victimised when combined with advocacy that empowers the victimised and when provided by women-centred organisations. To achieve maximum positive effect stable NGO funding needs to be assured and the state to demonstrate a willingness to cooperate with women-centred NGOs.

Legislation, Policing practices and criminal justice

Providing good practice requires both legislation and services for victims and perpetrators. Legislation determines the means that may be adopted in responding to domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, while services are required to implement legislation. As well as evaluating legislation and services separately, assessing the interaction between the two is essential to the evaluation of good practice.

Evaluation of state intervention in policing and prosecution shows that the identification of human rights violations in close relationships as a crime of public interest is an important prerequisite for policing and criminal justice action. Good practice in policing not only defines specific action to protect those victimised from further violence but also promotes investigation and evidence gathering. Couple negotiation, mediation or no action are eliminated as police responses. Satisfactory evaluation results, such as prevention of further abuse, lowered attrition rates and improved victim outcomes have been found where consistent and efficient police action is implemented and systematically monitored. Good policing practice requires systems and practices for systematically recording incidents.

Perpetrator programmes

Public policy and guidelines based on a gender power perspective oriented towards safety for those victimised with pro-active responses to perpetrators improve practice. Justice based cognitive behavioural programmes for perpetrators can challenge the gender-based attitudes and values behind their violence, improve men's social skills, teach alternative ways to resolve conflict and reduce physical

violence. These programmes should be combined with accompanying safety and support for victimised women and their children.

Adolescent treatment programmes for sexual offending, separate from those directed at adult men, demonstrate good practice.

Health – physical and mental

A gendered approach to health is a basic requirement. While in Europe national policies and action plans do not exist for physical and mental health, there are tentative moves to begin routine screening and enquiry by health professionals for domestic violence and the setting up of specialised units or centres for rape and sexual assault.

Institutional accountability and commitment are vital to effect real change. This is facilitated through strategies and policies that establish intra-institutional responsibilities, medical, social and psychological responses and interventions, referrals and dissemination of information.

Multi-agency approaches

While not generally established practice within the EU, some states have multi-agency forums that include both NGOs and statutory agencies confronted with victims and perpetrators. The aim is to establish long term cooperation and institutionalised forms of work that provide safety and empowerment for victimised women and their children. Research provides evidence that evaluation and monitoring are key elements in good practice in multi-agency projects and have a strong bearing on their effectiveness.

Professional training

Given the complexity and interdisciplinary skills needed for good practice responses to gender-based violence, a foundation of knowledge on domestic violence, rape and sexual assault must be integrated into the curricula of mandated vocational courses, while specific training is needed within further education of qualified professionals. Training is required for all those confronted in one way or another with victims and/or perpetrators of interpersonal violence; including the police, justice system, social work, mental and physical health, and housing staff.

Good practice in Central and Eastern Europe

Evaluation and research on interpersonal violence and human rights violations seem to be rare or completely absent in Central and Eastern European countries; this results in significant gaps in establishing good practice. Legal frameworks aimed at curbing domestic violence, rape and sexual assault lack implementation and evaluation. While the number of women-centred NGOs and state sponsored shelters differs between Central and Eastern European countries, funds for women-centred

NGOs have in some cases been withdrawn after accession into the European Union. Potential European Union members share the same issues.

Good practice requires funding streams for women-centred NGOs and information on how European Union funds that could be directed towards responses to violence against women and their children are being spent. This is a pre-condition for the development and research evaluation of good practice. Cooperation with NGOs by state agencies is missing to a much greater extent than in Western Europe.

Good practice issues applying to Western, Central and Eastern Europe

In member states and potential accession countries there is a deficit of both appropriate and sufficient mainstream and specialised services for women and children, including migrants, ethnic minorities, the elderly, the disabled, and those with dual problems, such as mental health and substance abuse. Training vocational, basic and further education requires expansion from initiatives of women-centred NGOs and from the goodwill of single agencies to become part of curricula and agency structures.

National Action Plans on violence against women, their implementation and monitoring in all European states would further comparative research and evaluation of services as would agreement on a gender-based European definition of domestic violence.

The viewpoint of victims and their situations should be included in monitoring and evaluation of all services aimed at domestic violence, rape and sexual assault.

Gaps in the evaluation of services for domestic violence, rape and sexual assault mean that too little is known about the extent of services, state involvement in their provision, monitoring and external evaluations. Good practice should secure women-centred NGO service provision, state involvement and a developed evaluation and monitoring culture that include systematic state inspections of statutory service interventions and professional practice. To date, no European Union state has reached this level of good practice.

Good practice recommendations for European policy

1. Indicators

To bring all member states to an equally high standard of protecting human rights and ensure that this standard is maintained, the European Union would benefit from agreement on indicators for domestic violence, rape and sexual assault in assessing good practice across national boundaries. Agreed indicators would increase the capacity for national replication or adaptation of cross European Union projects in different national contexts.

2. Infrastructure

There is a pressing need for effective monitoring and evaluation of NGO and statutory services offering support, counselling, refuges and housing for women and their children, policing and criminal justice, mental and physical health, perpetrator programmes, multi-agency approaches and professional training. This would be assisted by infrastructural developments in the European Union. Monitoring policy and its implementation within individual member states could be furthered by the submission of annual assessments on statutory provided and NGO services, including progress on attaining and improving minimum standards. The democratic processes on which civil society depends would be strengthened by the adoption of transparency provided by publicly available reports on policy and its implementation from member states and from NGO shadow reports.

3. European Union Directive

The European and international conventions signed by European Union member states call for sustained and continuous efforts to secure the rights of women and children. Exerting consistent long term European Union influence on policy and good practice of member, accession and potential European Union member states would be furthered by a European Union Directive on eliminating violence against women and children. This would facilitate effective intervention into the issues identified in this report. These include:

- a. The need for development of women-centred services in European national contexts where few or none exist.
- b. Expansion of both qualitative and quantitative research, internally and externally conducted evaluations and diversity in evaluation designs and methods.

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