

# **Inadequacy of services in NGOs dealing with marital physical abuse**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>AI</b>	<b>Amnesty International</b>
<b>IRC</b>	<b>International Rescue Committee</b>
<b>GoA</b>	<b>Government of Azerbaijan</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-governmental Organization</b>
<b>OSI</b>	<b>Open Society Institute</b>
<b>OSCE</b>	<b>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Program</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Population Fund</b>
<b>UNIFEM</b>	<b>United Nations Development Fund for Women</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>
<b>USDOS</b>	<b>United States Department of State</b>
<b>VAW</b>	<b>Violence Against Women</b>
<b>WAVE</b>	<b>Women Against Violence Europe</b>
<b>WCC</b>	<b>Women Crisis Center</b>

## **Methodology**

This study draws on both primary and secondary data sources. Interviews with service providers were conducted for the purpose of revealing information on current services offered to battered women in NGOs. Qualitative methods were employed to collect data for this report. Information available in this report is based on literature review and interviews made with NGO representatives. During interviews with NGOs, the respondents were asked to identify current shortcomings in their services.

There are a number of limitations which worth mentioning. First, it was difficult to contact all women's NGOs as some of them refused to share information about their services. In one women's NGO, the service provider gave talks about how they were helping women 10 years ago. Second, when the study was conducted some respondents were outside of the country and could not share their experience. Third, several organizations moved to another location and because of their outdated contact information it was impossible to reach them for interview.

## **Executive Summary**

NGOs working on cases of domestic violence generally offer only information and advice to women victims of physical abuse. However, they are often unable to offer any preventive programs as their work is generally limited to such activities as awareness-raising among women, organizing the 16 days campaign and offering psychological support. Due to lack of resources, NGOs face difficulties in retaining their staff. The majority of women's organizations do not have a full time staff. Consequently, there is a great need for professionals to work in NGOs. The level of services is inefficient in protecting women from abusive behavior and providing long-lasting services for survivors. In fact, existing services do not provide rehabilitation and the basis for integration of battered women into society.

The ultimate goal of this study is to identify the current service limitations of NGOs dealing with domestic violence. It is important to investigate the contribution of women's organizations towards the solution of this problem, as well as using statistical compilations and other sources to develop recommendations for the advancement of women's NGOs.

This paper explores existing gaps and challenges to ensure appropriate treatment of women and provides an overview of services currently available to women victims of violence. The study identifies services for addressing the needs of women victims of violence, including health services, shelters, counseling services and legal services. Qualitative research tools and techniques, such as a review of key documents and in-depth interviews, were used to gather information for the report. The study draws on a range of data sources. A literature review was conducted to gather primary and secondary data on the existing services and information on services was collected through interviews with social workers and other key experts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the UNFPA expert and NGO representatives.

Among other things, this report reveals the necessity to conduct a large-scale survey on marital assault in Azerbaijan. Such research will develop tools, information, training methodologies and program courses for NGOs, law enforcement agencies, medical institutions, the media and other interested parties. The findings of this survey will help NGOs to better understand the problem of physical violence and assist in training their staff on providing adequate services for battered women.

## **Background**

In the 1990s many national, women-focused NGOs began to emerge in response to a perceived lack of attention to women's issues from the government. As of 2000, 44 national women's NGOs were formally registered with the GoA (UNDP 2000). According to the findings of a study conducted by International Rescue Committee in 2004, "Most of the NGOs working in VAW prevention have been involved in research or awareness raising campaigns with few providing direct tangible services to survivors" (IRC 2004, p. 15).

NGO services for survivors of marital physical abuse are focused in urban areas and overall, very few women know about their existence. Initiatives aimed at providing services to women have primarily been limited to Baku, with no concrete prevention and response activities established in the regions (IRC 2004). Women subjected to marital assault face a number of obstacles that impede the process of protecting their rights. Often women do not seek help due to a sense of shame and fear of condemnation. Many women are blamed for violence directed against them and try to change their behavior in order to please a partner. Moreover, the attitude of women towards NGOs is ambiguous. Most women simply do not believe that NGOs are able to do something serious and meaningful in protecting their rights.

In women's NGOs, service providers offer information about domestic violence and its consequences for the family. The available services in NGOs do not provide safety support for women leaving abusive relationship. Besides directly applying to a lawyer the two most accessible services for confidential legal assistance are through the Azerbaijan Young Lawyers Association and the Women Crisis Center. Both have telephone hotlines and legal consultants on staff to offer advice (IRC 2004).

Women's NGOs have no uniform or standard way of collecting data. There have not been developed any information management systems that organizations can use to collect data and conduct research to measure the effectiveness of their programs. Most organizations are currently using their own system of data collection and information management which makes it difficult to get a national picture of the problem.

A 2004 study conducted by the IRC in Azerbaijan found that denial was usually the first response to questions about violence against women due a sense of shame and some forms of violence, particularly intimate partner violence, were widely understood to be normal. The study found that 43% of married women experienced violence in their current relationship. According to the official statistics data of Ministry of Internal Affairs, there were a total of 17,354 cases of violence against women reported between 1 January 2007 and 1 November 2009; 7974 of the total were cases of wife battering (Media Forum, 2009).

### **Activities in Brief**

The problem of marital physical abuse requires a concerted effort on the part of the government, NGOs and every member of society. In recent years, the establishment of a large number of crisis centers and shelters for victims of gender-based violence has been considered. The Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan has been adopted by the parliament on October 1, 2010 with a majority of votes after a series of controversial disputes.

Most activities on the issue are directed towards bringing change on a policy/legislative level or educating the public about women's issues (trainings, public awareness campaigns, roundtables, etc.) However, less attention has been paid to establishing direct services for women. Few organizations, the Women Crisis Center set up by Institute for Peace and Democracy, the Azerbaijan Young Lawyers Association, and the Azerbaijan Women's Rights Protection Society) provide psychological support and legal assistance to women confronted with domestic violence or discrimination (Social Work Education Project2003).

### **Urgent Necessity for Legal Aid**

There is a lack of easily accessible legal service provision specifically for women survivors of violence. In two and a half years, 973 individuals consulted the lawyer at the Women Crisis Center for advice. Unfortunately, lawyer at the Women Crisis Center cannot apply to court for their clients. However, even if services are available for victims of physical abuse, most women are not aware of them and do not know how to access them (IRC 2004).

### **Lack of Professional Staff in NGOs**

Although women often reach out for the services at these centers, the level of provided services is questionable. The projects staff members, including psychologist, often do not have professional education and work experience in dealing with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. They are not specialized in crisis intervention, trauma counseling, couple and family counseling.

### **Sharing Voices**

Hotlines serve as an effective means of alerting victims, their friends, and their families to the available services in an anonymous fashion (USAID 2006). In the Azerbaijan Republic the national helpline for women victims of family violence was established in 2005. The helpline is operated by WAVE Focal Point "Clean World - Social Union Aid to Women" and is neither funded by state nor does it receive money from any organization (Wave Country Report 2009).

## **Shelters for Battered Women**

According to a study conducted by OSI (2007), there are no shelters for survivors of intimate partner violence in Azerbaijan and the only operating shelter serves victims of trafficking. Currently there is a single shelter run by WAVE Focal Point “Clean World” called the “Clean World’s Especial Shelter”. The shelter is functioning for a limited amount of time and it does not provide enough resources for survivors of physical violence.

## **Causes and Effects**

NGOs have limited capacity in providing adequate services to address the needs of victims of physical violence in Azerbaijan. There are no programs for families and couples in crisis. “Funding for programs has been inconsistent, with several programs starting and stopping dependent on continuing donor involvement. Large scale programs that address the survivor’s holistic needs are costly and challenging and have never been implemented. Major initiatives to support the government in establishing programs that ‘assess and combat the problem’ have never been realized” (IRC 2004). Women's NGOs recognize that external donors are not always interested in the problem of domestic violence and they are in no hurry to allocate money to projects in the area. The lack of financial and human resources has limited the extent to which NGOs have been able to plan and implement capacity-building programs, although such skills for development programs are needed.

NGO services set up to protect women from abusive behavior are inefficient and do not provide long-term assistance to their constituents. Donor driven environment causes competition between NGOs and prevents cooperation among them (USAID 2004). Services being provided by NGOs are limited to Baku; service provision is non-existent in the regions. In addition, service providers do not fully understand their roles and lack awareness about appropriate interventions with abused women.

The majority of NGOs consider their problems are directly related with lack of funds. In Azerbaijan, NGOs working on gender-based violence receive their funds mostly from international donors such as UNFPA, OSI, Global Fund for Women, OSCE and etc. When funds are not available from these or other donors for particular projects envisaged by women’s NGO, the organization (not related to all) feels that it could not achieve its mission. The main opportunity to survive as an organization for NGOs is to change their program and for a short period to work on issues other than gender-based violence. In this case, the real solutions of social problems do not appear practical, and if they appear, often are not enforced.

The problems of development and sustainability of NGOs are associated with the current government. The majority of local NGOs lack support from the state and are in a fierce competitive struggle, in which the leading source of funds are foreign donor organizations. NGOs implement their projects through grants from international donors, the majority of women's organizations are dependent on the direction of grant-funding agencies. International donor organizations working with local NGOs and financing their projects expect that NGOs will become self-reliant and stable institutions for the long term. It is very difficult to predict whether the NGO will operate without another grant and continue to provide the same level of service to the community.

### **Parties Involved**

The most important stakeholders for women's NGOs are its donors. NGOs express their liability differently before various donors. If a donor is an international organization, then NGO simply complies with its requirements. Transparency and accountability over activities should be much more serious and comprehensive in case NGO uses funds from state budget. In addition, NGOs are accountable to its employees, beneficiaries, partners, government and society at large. NGO will gain support from potential sources of funding, if it meets and balances the expectations of various stakeholders. Government needs to realize the role of civil society organizations, because NGOs contribute to the implementation of innovative initiatives that foster democratic process. Moreover, NGOs can mobilize additional resources to address existing gaps in service delivery.

Women's NGOs should focus their projects towards the needs of its beneficiaries and beyond funds. Such kind of projects would be a much better of quality, rather than those written for the purpose of grant competition. In addition, there should be an outlined strategy of delivering NGO's interests to stakeholders: government, international organizations and NGOs. If at least one of the target groups would be interested in better service provision, either the donor or the state will provide grant for the project. And of course, these projects will be subject to a wide analysis of all stakeholders and this will lead to positive outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

The problem of inadequate service provision for abused women requires an integrated solution. Several alternatives named below address this issue:



***Establish close links with government service providers.*** NGOs should join forces with other service providers such as hospitals, centers of legal advice and police. Cooperation with government institutions will keep women's NGOs informed and help them improve their services to women. Women's NGOs should strengthen cooperation and communication with government in providing support to victims of domestic violence which will broaden the range of services.

***Increase collaborative relations with partner women's organizations.*** NGOs are a key link in the system of real assistance to victims of violence. According to the chairwoman of Women's Association for Rational Development, Shahla Ismayilova, "NGOs dealing with marital physical abuse lack information-sharing mechanisms and a coordinated approach." Coordination between NGOs will help to strengthen existing programs, sustain continuity of the projects and eliminate the duplication of each other's activities.

***Get involved in the activities of government institutions.*** It is important for the government and NGOs to maintain transparency of their activities. Joint conferences would foster service delivery. Expert of Women's Crisis Center, Matanat Azizova considers it necessary to establish rehabilitation centers that are under joint control of the state and civil society for victims of domestic violence.

***Lobby Government for support.*** NGOs are the informal partners that help the government implement the provisions of certain international agreements. Due to the fact that most NGOs depend on funding through grants, their mission is primarily aimed at the implementation of development trends of international donors.

***Strengthen existing services for women.*** Service providers need skills to adequately assist survivors of marital physical abuse. NGOs should initiate and actively carry out training programs for psychologists, health workers and other categories of professionals involved in helping survivors of physical abuse aimed at improving the quality of provided services.

The recommended alternatives are “*establish close links with government service providers*” and “*increase collaborative relations with partner women’s organizations*”. The establishment of relationships between women’s NGOs and government requires special attention. The help from international donors is not a long-term presence in order to further develop the NGO sector, in particular with regard to their stability, and requires the combined efforts of both sides. In addition, women’s NGOs should practice working together to provide services to women and strengthen the referral system. Women’s organizations should apply jointly for funding from donors and establish the Coalition of women’s NGOs. The described alternatives implemented together will ultimately lead to better service delivery in women’s NGOs.

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