

Local governments fight against intimate-partner violence

INTRODUCTION

The International Observatory of Violence against Women (↳[OIVF](#)) presents in this factsheet theoretical thematic elements to understand the impact of violence against women in the public space, while sharing practical examples of local governments to combat them, with the aim of encouraging other territories to adopt them and take measures against this kind of violence.

Intimate-partner violence: understanding and measuring the scope

At world level, [↳1 in 3 women experience physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner during their life](#). At European level, 1 in 5 women has suffered physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner. In Latin America, almost 20 million women and girls suffer sexual and physical violence.

Although the forms of intimate-partner violence may vary from one region to another in the world, this violence remains a violation of human rights. It is a violence based on gender and the historical domination of men over women. These social relations often determine gender stereotypes. Thus, violence within a couple disproportionately affects women. That is why we will use the term “woman” to designate the victim and the term “man” to designate the aggressor.

Local governments must quantify the scope of the phenomenon in their territory, highlight violence and improve its understanding by local actors.

Intimate-partner violence is different from marital disputes or conflicts, where two opposing points of view are in a relationship of equality and where each person retains their independence. In intimate-partner violence, it is a relationship of domination and power of the aggressor over the victim. Through his words and behaviour, the aggressor wants to control and destroy his (ex)partner. Often several forms of violence can occur at the same time. Most of the time, the aggressor will use different forms of violence to exert maximum control over his victim.

All In intimate-partner violence has major consequences for the physical and mental health of victims. [↳According to the WHO, women victims of violence at the hands of their partner have twice the possibility of having problems with alcohol consumption and depression](#) and four and a half times the chances of committing suicide.

This violence also has consequences for children. Pregnancy and motherhood, especially during early childhood, are additional risk factors for the appearance or

acceleration of domestic violence. Children are co-victims of this violence, they see their mother suffer violence, they are always subject to psychological violence, and, in 1 in 2 cases to physical violence or even sexual violence. The repercussions on children are multiple, affecting their health and their emotional, psychological and cognitive development. Adequate care is essential because these traumas have a very high probability of lasting throughout adult life.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

The territorial diagnosis, Observatory of Violence against Women and Girls – Ngazidja, Comoros

Created in 2021 by Ngazidja Town Council, the Observatory of Violence against Women and Girls carries out an annual inventory of the extent of local violence thanks to data collected by its partners: number of reports to the gendarmerie, court

convictions, support from the listening service and specialised associations. This allows for an overview of the situation of violence against women and girls on Ngazidja Island.

Security cabinet – Iztapalapa, Mexico City

The municipality has set up a **↳security cabinet** headed by the mayor, which brings together the competent law enforcement agencies in the area on a daily basis. The services jointly assess incidents of violence. Once a week, the session is devoted to analysing crimes against women (sexual

assault, rape, etc.). Since 2018, this data has made it possible to better understand the context of the facts, to adjust priorities in terms of prevention and protection, and to assess the improvement of local policies to facilitate reporting and the identification of victims.



Training professionals: a priority to end the cycle of intimate-partner violence

The aggressor implements and develops strategies to ensure his dominance over the victim and his impunity: he isolates the victim, devalues her, inverts the blame regarding his acts of violence, creates a climate of terror, and recruits allies. Using the different forms of violence and following a precise cycle, the aggressor manipulates the victim, dominates her, and breaks her resistance.

Intimate-partner violence can be committed at any time during a relationship: at the beginning of the relationship, during pregnancy, at the time of a break-up, or after the relationship has ended. Because of the emotional bond between the victim and her aggressor, this type of violence can be difficult for the victim to express, regardless

of whether the bond is present or past, whether they live together or not. Intimate-partner violence is often multiplied and intensified when the female victim announces the break-up or separation, as well as in the early stages after the separation. This is possessive violence. **It is essential that all professionals (social support, health, education, police, justice, etc.) understand that all violence is dangerous. For real identification, professionals must be trained in systematic questioning.**

Professionals working with women victims in local governments must be trained in the identification, guidance and care of women victims of violence.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

Systematic questioning and the system Un Toit pour Elle – Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, France

Systematic questioning is the practice in which social and health services professionals, who are in contact with the residents of the area, systematically ask questions in interviews about the violence suffered in order to facilitate the disclosure of this violence. This practice involves mastering the techniques of active listening and care, as well as knowing how to guide victims according to their needs. The Seine-Saint-Denis Observatory of Violence against Women regularly trains community teams in this practice. A recent study by the Observatory shows that identifying victims of violence through systematic questioning helps overcome the fear and shame experienced by victims.

Although 9% of women turned to social services for reasons of intimate-partner violence, after systematic questioning, 71% revealed this type of violence. Moreover, systematic questioning also allows victims to have access to comprehensive support specialised in violence.

In terms of housing, the Observatory coordinates cities and landlords and landlords of social housing in their territory to reserve social accommodation for victims of violence. This *Un Toit pour elle* system enables 30 to 40 women to be rehoused in emergency accommodation each year.

Training of professionals and “mujeres multiplicadoras” – Quilmes, Argentina

Quilmes City Council periodically conducts training sessions for all its municipal teams so that any woman who is a victim of violence and uses its services can be welcomed, listened to and supported according to her needs. In addition, Quilmes also trains

“↳ *Mujeres multiplicadoras*”, women who go to different neighbourhoods to inform the population about violence prevention, the rights of victims, and the different resources available in the city.

The impact of domestic violence: constructing a local public policy response to protect victims

To protect women who are victims of intimate-partner violence, local governments must implement cross-cutting and multidisciplinary support throughout the process to end violence: legal, social, psychological monitoring, accommodation, professional reintegration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

Suitable places and comprehensive care – Jenin, Palestine

The city of Jenin, with the Observatory of Violence against Women of Jenin, has opened a shelter for women victims of intimate-partner violence in the region thanks to funding from the French Development Agency within the framework of the international project «Towards Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence».

The centre offers comprehensive care to women: emergency shelter, and psychological, medical and social support. Lack of resources is one of the main obstacles to escaping the cycle of intimate-partner violence because it prevents financial independence to access housing.

Barcelona: Assistance, Recovery and Accommodation Service - SAR

Barcelona City Council's **SARA** is a service that acts as a gateway to public and private resources for emergency and long-term accommodation for women victims of violence. The service has a multidisciplinary team of professionals from various fields who offer comprehensive care, including information, personalised treatment, access to protection resources, employment services, group therapy

and prevention and community awareness programmes. It is aimed at adult women in Barcelona who have suffered violence, as well as children and adolescents who have lived in violent situations. The service also supports the children of women who have died as a result of intimate-partner violence, whether by femicide or forced suicide, or who are sent by a relative or caregiver.

Prevention: reducing violence and transforming societies at the local level for a culture of equality between women and men

Local governments educate their residents about intimate-partner violence through events, prevention campaigns, talks in schools, or by developing prevention tools.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

Community workers meet women victims of violence where they live – Iztapalapa, Mexico

Iztapalapa City Council has opened ↪ Casas de las Siemprevivas in different neighbourhoods of the city. These houses offer a wide variety of services to residents, including legal, psychological and medical helplines, group meetings, wellness activities, yoga, craft activities and coffee talks for victims. Women can come anonymously to participate in a cultural activity and, at the same time, benefit from specialised support.

Within the framework of this programme, Iztapalapa has community facilitators who approach families house by house to start a dialogue with the members of the household about living together. Going to their home enables awareness-raising among the population and identification of victims of violence to then direct them to municipal spaces of comprehensive care for women: the Casas de las Siemprevivas, where they will find specialised support services to escape violence.

Jeunes contre le sexisme, (youths against sexism), youths have ideas – Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, France

The Observatory of Violence against Women in Seine-Saint-Denis organises a programme to prevent sexism in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education. During the school year, facilitators raise awareness among young people about equality between girls and boys and the fi-

ght against sexism. They create prevention tools (videos, posters, poetry slam, theatre) in creative workshops. At the end of the school year, all the work undertaken is shared. The validation of knowledge about this subject is enhanced by obtaining a “diploma in the fight against sexism”.



And you, what are you doing on a local level? Tell us about your experience!

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