

Support to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: 2001-2006

Violence against women is a phenomenon that occurs in all parts of the world.¹ Several social movements since the change of government in 1989 have uncovered the need to address the issue of domestic violence in Romania. In preparation for accession to European Union (EU) accession in January 2007, the country began to implement social programs, including domestic violence, and corresponding legislation to meet the criteria demanded by membership in the EU.

Strategic approach

Through the work of the Romanian Family Health Initiative (RFHI), JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI R&T) coordinated with Romanian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to support the creation of the National Coalition Against Violence as a mechanism to strengthen the civil society capacity to end violence against women. The Coalition facilitated long-term partnerships among the NGOs and improved communication between civil society and the responsible agencies in the government. The Coalition was instrumental in coordinating activities and fostering the development and promotion of legislation to prevent domestic violence in Romania.

RFHI played an active role in identifying key partners to work on domestic violence issues in Romania and in fostering coordinated participation and collaboration of the key local NGOs such as the Counseling Center for Women and Girls Against Sexual Abuse and Violence (known as ‘Artemis’), the Eastern European Institute for Reproductive Health (EEIRH), the Center for Women’s Protection in the Industrial Platform (APACA), and key funding agencies that include: USAID, UNFPA, the World Bank, the EU and European Commission (EC), and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Achievements

- ❖ Updated and completed a database documenting NGO activities in the field of violence against women. A CD of the database was disseminated nationally in 2003.
- ❖ Initiated NGO coordination to form the National Coalition Against Violence.
- ❖ Provided technical assistance and logistics support to the MOPH’s Inter-ministerial Working Group that was mandated to design the national strategy against domestic violence (2002 – 2003). Drafted the national strategy, following a collaborative process of negotiation between all key stakeholders active in the field of domestic violence in Romania.
- ❖ Facilitated the signing of a cooperation protocol between the General Police Inspectorate and the Coalition, which represented the first public recognition by a governmental institution of the Coalition’s importance and role in the field of domestic violence.
- ❖ Facilitated the signing of two protocols of collaboration between the NAFP and the National Coalition, formalizing the role of the Coalition as a government partner in the design and implementation of the national strategy.
- ❖ Conducted several awareness campaigns, in particular the 16 International Days of Activism Against Domestic Violence campaign that ran for four years.

¹ WHO Multi-country study, 2005

Recommendations

- ❖ **Research:** More information and data is needed on the prevalence and determinants of domestic violence in Romania to monitor trends and changing attitudes that determine the phenomenon of violence and to assess the effectiveness of current programs in place, and to identify gaps in the system.
- ❖ **Capacity development:** Improve services and ensure ongoing training for the professionals involved in victims' assistance, including law enforcement officials, medical professionals, judges, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals.
- ❖ **Advocacy and communication:** Gender equity and domestic violence issues should be on the political agenda of the Ministry of Labor Social Solidarity and Family, Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), and other ministries. The role of social workers and medical professionals regarding domestic violence (DV) must be clearly defined.
- ❖ **Sustainability of the National Coalition Against Violence:** Specific roles for the Coalition as the repository of the grassroots experience and in-depth expertise in the field of combating and preventing violence must be promoted by the National Coalition representatives and its partners (including local and national governmental institutions).