

Webinar "Local and regional governments against gender-based violence: intimate partner violence and feminicide"

Key Concepts of the webinar:

Intimate partner violence - Feminicide - Violence against women - Local public policies – Cycle of Violence

Introduction

Violence against women is universal. It takes different forms, can be perpetrated in both public and private spheres, and has tragic consequences for women's lives. In this webinar, we look specifically at violence of men on women in the private sphere. The most widespread and globally recognised form of violence is intimate partner violence. This type of violence is based on same men's control and domination over women and intensified during the COVID-19 crisis, generating a "[Shadow Pandemic](#)".

At the global level, [1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner](#). In [Europe](#), 1 in 5 women are victim of intimate partner violence. In Latin America, nearly [20 million women and girls](#) suffer from sexual and physical violence.

Despite its forms may vary around the world, intimate partner violence represents a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination based on gender and on the historical male dominance in social relations. Intimate partner violence disproportionately affects women: this why, in this webinar, women will be designated as "victims"; and men as "aggressors/abusers/perpetrators".

This kind of violence differs from disputes or conflicts, in which two points of view are opposed in an equal relationship since the aggressor is taking power over the victim through his words and behavior to control and destroy his (ex)partner.

Local and Regional Governments - due of their proximity to their inhabitants – are becoming key places to fight intimate partner violence and to implement public policies in this regard. Exchanging, networking and sharing methodologies and strategies between local governments related to violence against women is therefore essential to advance in this fight worldwide. This is one of the main objectives of the project "[For caring territories protecting women victims of violence](#)".

The forms of intimate partner violence

Although a woman may be the victim of only one form of violence, this is not often the case: most of the time, the abuser will use the different forms of violence in order to have a stronger hold on the victim.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence is associated with all other forms of violence. It is often verbal and can take the form of shouting, insults, threats, humiliation, emotional blackmail, banning friends, family, etc.... This form of violence implies a strategy of control aimed at devaluing the victim, isolating her, at

depriving her of all autonomy and at convincing her of her inabilities and subordination to the aggressor. Although recurrent, this violence is often underestimated by the victim. However, it is often the first form of violence suffered by victims and subsequently allows the perpetrator to create a climate of fear and exercise other forms of violence. This is one of the most dangerous forms of violence, which can drive the victim to suicide.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence includes situations in which a person (especially men over women) imposes one or more behaviours, one or more comments (verbal or written), pictures, messages, or an act of a sexual nature on another person. These acts are suffered and not desired by the victim.

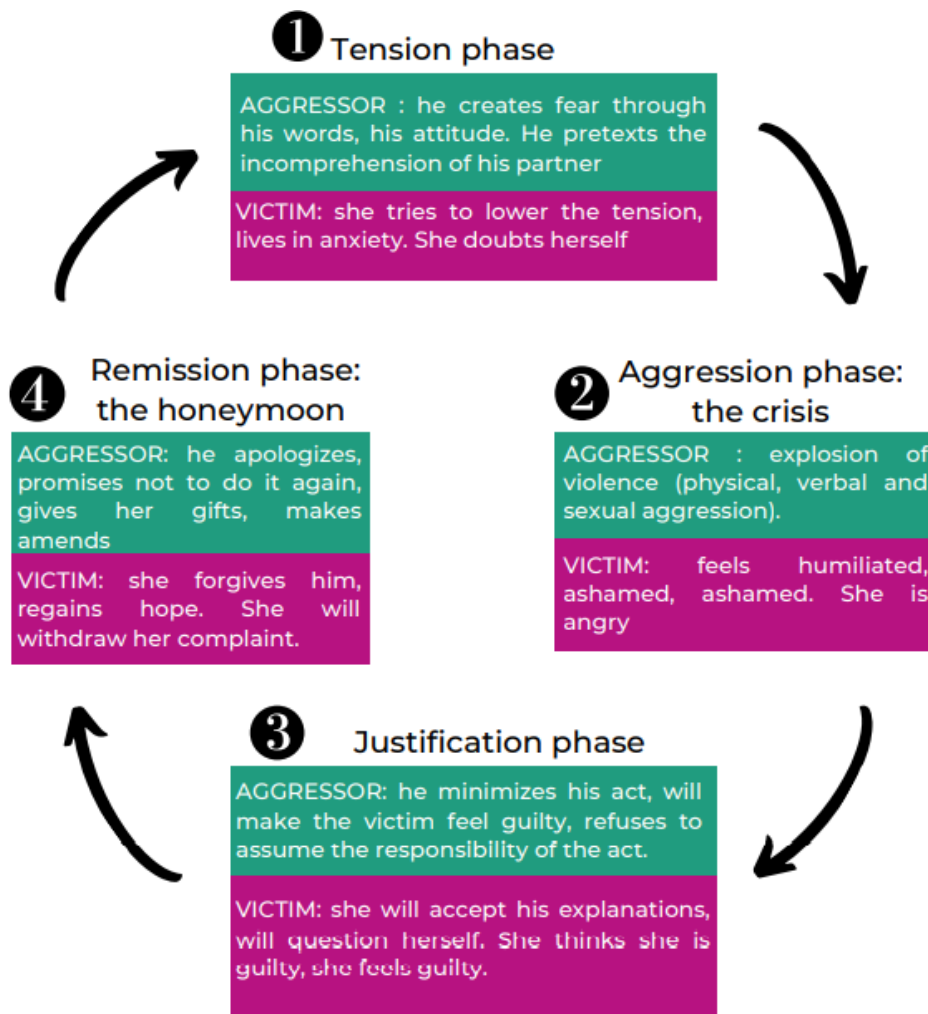
Economic/material violence

Economic violence can take the form of control of the victim's expenses, resources, payment means, but also of work prohibition, confiscation of documents, etc. Economic violence aims to deprive the victim of all possibilities of financial autonomy while accentuating her isolation.

Physical violence

This form of violence is extremely dangerous, as the aggressor may even kill the victim. Prior to this point, physical violence can take the form of shoving, biting, hitting with or without an object, burning, strangulation, confinement, violence against animals, etc.

The cycle of violence



The aggressor puts in place and develops strategies to ensure both his domination over the victim and his impunity vis-à-vis the entourage. These strategies can sometimes be supported by the victim's personal, religious and cultural values. By using different forms of violence and the cycle of violence, the perpetrator manipulates the victim and puts her under his control.

Violence can be committed at any time during a relationship: at the beginning of the relationship, during pregnancy, at the time of the break-up or even after the relationship has ended. Because of the emotional bond between the victim and the abuser, "the cycle of violence" can be difficult for the victim to disclose, regardless of the relationship being present or past, and of whether the aggressor and the victim are living together or not. However, intimate partner violence is often multiplied and intensified when the victim announces the break-up and separation and during the initial stages of the separation.

The consequences of intimate partner violence on victims and their loved ones

Intimate partner violence has a significant impact on women's health both physically and psychologically. According to the WHO, [women who are abused by their intimate partners are twice as likely to experience alcohol abuse, depression and four and a half times more likely to commit suicide.](#)

Intimate partner violence and femicide also have consequences for children, especially during the period of pregnancy and during the early childhood, which represent additional risk factors for the onset or acceleration of intimate partner violence. Children are co-victims of intimate partner violence, they witness the violence suffered by their mother and may themselves be victims of psychological or physical violence. Every year, many children are killed as a result of intimate partner violence, at the same time as their mother is killed by the perpetrator. The repercussions on the child can be multiple, with a particular impact on his or her health and emotional, psychological and cognitive development. Without appropriate care, these traumas are very likely to persist throughout adult life.

Femicides/femicide

Intimate femicide

At the end of this spiral of violence there is the most extreme form of intimate partner violence: femicide, i.e. the murder of a woman. [It is estimated that 137 women are killed every day worldwide by their partners or family members. The regions with the highest number of women killed purely by intimate partners \(not including other family members\) in 2017 were Asia and Africa.](#) Intimate femicide can occur at any point in the relationship, even after the break-up. Pregnancy and break-ups are two factors that increase the risk of femicide.

Other types of femicides

“**Honour killings**” involve the killing of a girl or woman by a family member because she has (or it is believed to) have committed a sexual or behavioural transgression against gender norms and stereotypes, such as adultery, sexual relations or pregnancy out of wedlock , a refusal to a forced marriage; or even after she experienced a sexual abuse.

Femicide committed by a person who is not in an intimate relationship with the victim is known as **non-intimate femicide**. Such crimes can be committed in isolation by different individuals in a territory, but there are also situations of systematic killings of women, particularly in Latin America. From 1993 to 2013, 1441 women were brutally murdered in the city of Ciudad Juárez, on the Mexico/US border. The majority of these crimes remain unsolved, creating a climate of total impunity for the perpetrators and allowing the continued reproduction of this deadly violence against the women of Juarez.

Key messages of the webinar:

On intimate partner violence:

Several local governments have recognised **the importance of cross-sectoral approach between the different services and departments of local governments in order to put in place comprehensive policies to fight all the forms of intimate partner violence**. This can translate into the development of local mapping/diagnosis to measure the extent of intimate partner violence in the city/territory; and into the implementation of "systematic questioning" on intimate partner violence. Such transversal approach also includes **mechanisms and policies to prevent violence in public and private spaces and to raise awareness among the youth within the education system; as well as to ensure political and economic emancipation of women**. This approach can be summarized in the notion of a "**feminist municipalism**", which recognizes the fundamental role of all women in advancing our societies, and which encourages the whole ecosystem of the city/territory to denounce more strongly all types of violence they suffer in order to promote their freedom and autonomy.

The need to link policies for the protection of women victims of intimate partner violence with poverty eradication was also emphasized as an essential element. Indeed, the lack of financial autonomy of women can be both a factor of violence and obstacle for the exit from the cycle of violence itself, especially in the least developed countries.

The participants highlighted the notion of "continuity of support", which implies the development of specific mechanisms to support women victims of violence throughout the entire process of recovery (legal, social, psychological support; as well as accommodation, professional reintegration, etc). To this end, it is important to put in place local tools to identify violence as early as possible: the earlier the violence is revealed, the better the professionals can help and support the victim. **It is therefore essential to raise awareness and train public actors working with women victims of violence to examine and consider all the different components and forms of intimate partner violence**.

Children can be co-victims of intimate partner violence: health professionals and school staff can support to identify intimate partner violence, notably by opening safe spaces where women and/or children/youth can report violence.

The importance of working **with different actors** - in particular **by strengthening and training the police** (especially female police officers) - **as well as the needs to study the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and to improve the quality of statistics** (e.g. by funding specific studies or by establishing local observatories to collect data) at local level were also highlighted.

Actions to prevent and raise awareness of intimate partner violence also appear to be essential elements of a comprehensive policy against intimate partner violence. **In this sense, many local governments work with civil society – especially local associations and the media - to develop effective communication strategies to increase understanding of intimate partner violence**. Participants also underscored the need to encourage prevention actions aimed at **young people and children** who may live in families where intimate partner violence is present, by promoting **initiatives in schools and childcare programmes**.

Finally, local governments emphasized **the role of cities and territories in implementing national laws, and in raising awareness of these laws among inhabitants**. Local governments are also involved in **advocacy to advance them, opening up new debates that help affirm violence against women as a public matter**.

On intimate feminicide:

The attendees highlighted the role of the press and feminist associations at the local level in assessing feminicides, making them visible and raising public awareness of the extent of the phenomenon. Over time, the data gathered by associations and press and their advocacy have led to the enactment of new laws, to national assessments of feminicides (as in France, for example); as well as to the development of specific mechanisms for the prevention of femicide, both for professionals and for victims.

Several participants underscored the lack of formal recognition of femicide, which may also be reinforced by cultural barriers (for example with regard to 'honour killings'). This non-recognition implies that some feminicides are not recorded as such at either local or national level, and therefore not addressed. This is the case, for example, of situations of "forced suicide", i.e. suicide induced by the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

With regard to the prevention of intimate partner femicide, local governments stressed the importance of protection mechanisms and/or safe spaces at local level to ensure that as soon as a woman discloses violence - bearing in mind that the first violence disclosed is never the first suffered - her denunciation is immediately translated into concrete protection mechanisms and access to rights. In this context, the participants stressed the importance of establishing a culture of protection among civil servants and professionals so that women victims disclosing intimate partner violence must be believed and protected.

The participants highlighted the lack of attention and recognition given to child co-victims, who are often present at the time of the murders and who often experience different forms of psychotrauma. In this sense, it is important for local governments to act in order to raise awareness among professionals so that they adequately support children.

All these actions imply joint training activities with different partners and cities/territories (especially with the police and the Courts Service), including to deepen the work with children and families of victims. In this perspective, it is essential that these different partners can network to develop a common vision, for example through spaces or platforms for exchange, sharing and learning such as local and international observatories.

Local initiatives implemented by Local and Regional Governments

- **Iztapalapa** has implemented *Siemprevivas*, an inter-institutional and comprehensive public policy to fight gender-based violence in the private sphere. The policy aims to raise awareness among family members in Izatapalapa about the concept of violence and how they live together; as well as to reflect together on possible solutions to improve family relations and prevent violence. *Siemprevivas* also includes the establishment of spaces to guarantee women's rights and care: through the *Casas de las Siemprevivas*, women victims of violence can access health, education, culture, sports and employment. In addition, the policy also includes other areas of work such as popular education, peace-building and the '*pedagogy of tenderness*', which includes actions aimed at women's health, legal assistance and entrepreneurship.

- **Lilongwe City** has promoted school committees and 'mothers' groups' to discuss and denounce violence; and has established a partnership between the health system and the police to reduce the risk of femicide.

- **Valencia** has approved a Framework for Women's Equality with a series of cross-cutting and contiguous objectives and actions for the prevention of violence, especially against children. The city has also set up REPARA, a municipal psychosocial service for men to promote egalitarian relationships, free of any form of violence against women.

- **Libreville** is in the process of disseminating the new law of September 2021 (National law on the elimination of violence against women) and the national programme "Gabon Egalité", in particular with female police officers.
- **Jenin** is working on a study to examine the situation of violence against women as a basis for developing local laws and policies.
- **Ezulwini** has implemented "neighbourhood watches" with the local police, specific mechanisms that oblige any observer of violence to report it.
- **The Department of Seine-Saint-Denis (Observatoire des violences envers les femmes - OVF)** has also developed the Femicide Protocol, which is based on a partnership with justice and health services (paediatrics and child psychiatry care) to give adequate care to children following a femicide. This system has highlighted the importance of specialised care for the emotional, cognitive and psychological recovery of children and has just been extended to the whole of France. The Department also organises silent marches after each femicide to pay tribute to the victim but also to raise awareness among residents against intimate partner violence. Since its creation, the OVF has designed several mechanisms and tools to protect women victims of violence in partnership with the police and the justice system, such as "the protection order" or the "serious danger" telephone. The Observatory also has prevention tools aimed at habitants and professionals as the "violentometer", and the book "*Penser le danger et les signaux d'alerte*", which help to better identify and address violence against women.
- **Santiago de Chile** has developed a questionnaire on the level of risk (which includes the "risk of femicide") in order to implement adequate measures (e.g. shelters for "life-threatening" victims or protective spaces for political and economic support) in collaboration with national actors.
- **Mandlazaki** has favoured a legal approach that allows any person in the neighbourhood (family, neighbour) who witnesses an episode of violence to file a complaint. The city has also opened offices to receive complaints directly at the City Hall.

Initiatives implemented by international organizations:

- **UCLG Africa** launched the "African City Zero Tolerance to all forms of violence against women and girls" campaign, which engages local elected officials in thinking about strategies to address violence according to the specificities of each territory.
- **UN Women** has approved a new statistical framework to measure femicide in order to develop more effective prevention measures. In addition, UN Women's work on femicide focuses on supporting governments in the development of specific national legislation focused on prevention, protection and policy development.