CASA DELLE DONNE PER NON SUBIRE VIOLENZA
(Antiviolence Centre for women in Bologna, Italy)

Counselling, support and shelter for women – with or without children – who have been victims of violence

Project Summary

Reasons for and Analysis of the Need

Violence against women, in whatever form it may present itself, especially domestic violence, is among the most well-concealed social phenomena. Analyzed from a criminological point of view, it represents a phenomenon within one of the highest levels of unreported incidents of criminality. Difficulties women encounter when they report episodes of violence they have suffered to public authorities makes the number of reports minuscule in comparison with the real incidence of these episodes in the daily life of the female population. What judiciary statistics reflect is not the real dimension of the issue, but rather the inclination of the female victims to report the issue, the willingness of police to react to the reported incident, and finally judiciary authority taking these acts seriously. National surveys taken for several years now in many countries have shown to be an inadequate instrument for revealing the real entity of the phenomenon of violence against women, as codified in criminal law. Specific research facilitated especially for the purpose of easing women's fears of reporting violence against them, and therefore exclusively directed at quoting the phenomenon of violence against women, displayed the projected percentage of unreported incidents in comparison with the results of national investigations of reported violence. Too often moreover, women are considered responsible and/or accomplices for being battered inside and outside of the family environment. The enormous difficulties they face when trying to protect themselves and stop the violent behaviour are not taken into account. These are the reasons why our association reports the necessity of giving a concrete solution to the demand of support of and assistance to battered women.

Objectives

Our purpose is to support and assist women victims of violence, especially those abused in a domestic environment and also frequently involving children. We aim for comprehensive assistance, counselling, including providing information, psychological support and legal support in order to promote the undeniable human right to not be violated as well as the right to security. Our objective is to solve the problems that are a product of **psychological violence** (such as insults, blackmails, threats), of the women and children who seek our assistance, **physical violence** (such as blows, injuries or other acts of personal freedom deprivation), or **economic violence** (such as deprivation or control of economic resources, including the possibility of working, or other acts of control such as forced contractual participation).

Such violation of fundamental rights and of the physical and psychological integrity of women scars these women for their entire lives. Our project, moreover, stimulates relations and exchanges with the other local social programs. Our objective is to work in an integrated way with other agencies and institutions as a means of harvesting local competence and local ability in order to increase the potential of every woman as she wilfully and successfully fights violence. Our project uses the collaboration of qualified women volunteers, and, in general promotes the culture of volunteering, for helping people in need, specifically those cases involving children.

Activity
The objectives of the project are pursued through the following means:

- Information, counselling, psychological support and sheltering of abused women;
- Psychological support and sheltering of children of abused women to recover their children relationship and the relational sphere;
- Psychological support to foster parenting skills of the counselled women;
- Legal assistance/information, and escort to police stations as well as social and local hygienic services;
- Collaboration network including public security facilities, public institutions and volunteer associations;
- Collecting data from the project and the shelters;
- Raising awareness and providing information for potential beneficiaries on opportunities and services that are offered.

The institutional activities are integrated with

- job-search orientation services for those women whose abuse forces them to find or change work;
- specific courses on gender violence financed through the European Social Fund as required by external institutions and associations.

Expected Results and Efficiency of the Project Time
Our expected result is to free women from violence, helping them leave the unbearable situations they are enduring by offering protection for them and their children. We want to contribute to reclaiming and fostering their self-esteem in order to avoid recurring situations. We expect a greater efficiency in preventing episodes of violence as well as an improvement in the network of services designed to aid such victims. This network of assistance will be based on official protocols that govern the relationships between the several local agencies. We expect the efficiency of our project over time will solidify as a result of quality intervention with the victims and raising awareness within the appropriate communities. The involvement of these communities, such as paediatricians, family doctors, Emergency Room personnel, and other authorities working on the prevention of crime, are key to success.

Location of the Project
The institutional activity takes place in Bologna and within its 50 suburbs, and emergency shelter is also available for those who suffer violence in other Italian cities and are transferred to Bologna through our network of assistance.

Number and Types of Beneficiaries
Based on our data, we predict to counsel more than 500 women a year, in addition to the 50 women and children whom we expect to host in our two shelters. Direct typology of potential beneficiaries: battered women and their mistreated children, women victims of violence and trafficking. The indirect beneficiaries of the project are the family members and friends of those affected by this phenomenon, as well as the network of assistance (composed by the local social services) that direct women to our association to be sheltered for up to 5 months. In fact, the citizenry of Bologna benefits, because we offer a physical place to seek information, report incidents and find lasting solutions. Raising awareness highlights the emergence of the phenomenon of violence against women and its gradual and desired reduction.
About 20 women employees and 30 volunteers.

Forms of Communication within the Initiative:
Promotion is developed in the following areas: a) advertisement of our services; b) events for the purpose of raising awareness; and c) other public events related to violence against women. Such public events include: posting flyers; handing out flyers concerning hygienic services available at certain locations, such as Emergency Rooms; publication of articles in local press; our newsletter (3 issues per year); our website www.casadonne.it. Finally, we also organize conferences and demonstrations related to the 8th of March (International Women's Day) and the 25th of November (International Day Against Violence Against Women), and an annual Festival of Illustrated Violence (25th novembre) with many events like exhibitions of Silent Witnesses, debates, films, etc.

Major Points of the Project
An innovative gender approach that improves the potential of women who request our services. We work on

strengthening personal research (for the purpose of autonomy) through a personalized approach built on personal potential as well as resources. We grant anonymity and security in a protected and secret place, where it is possible to keep one's own identity secret. We offer gratuity of service and 20 years of experience in the field of violence against women. We manage 2 shelter houses in Bologna and the surrounding area. Two more shelter are for trafficked women and women and their children with socio-economic difficulties

Weak Points and Risks of the Project

Uncertainty of financing can prevent the progress of long-term projects. Being that our intervention is anonymous, we have difficulties in monitoring the progress to our intervention after the women have left our facilities. We lack a network of collaboration based on official protocols that would authorize a coordinated approach to stop episodes of violence. Another potential difficulty is reaching out to some parts of the female population (such as immigrants of some nationalities).

Participation in Networks

National level (Italy):	Dire – Donne in Rete contro la violenza (www.centriantiviolenza.eu)
Regional level (Emilia-Romagna):	Coordinamento dei centri Antiviolenza dell'Emilia-Romagna (www.casadonne.it)
European level:	Wave Network (www.wave-network.org)
Global level:	globalnetworkforwomenshelter@acws.ca

International projects

Genderwork, Mainstreaming and Communicating Gender Equality in Anti Poverty and Inclusion Strategies", by Oxfam GB (UK), Lamoro, Lamoro (Italy) and WAVE (Austria). PROGRESS project funded by the European commission, 2008-09.

Muvi, Men Using Violence in Intimate Relationship. Developing Strategies of Intervention with Men Using Violence in Intimate Relationship, Daphne Program 2006-2008, runned by Bologna Municipality, Casa delle donne, Centro ATV - Alternative to violence Oslo, ITD Society (Innovacion, Trasferencia y Desarrollo) of Barcellona, Training Istitute DIMITRA of Greece and AEDA - Developing Agency of Athen Municipality.

Improve, Quality services for victims of domestic violence, Daphne project 2006, runned by Wave (Women Against Violence Europe), in partnership with many european countries, JLS/2006/DAP-1/279/WC 30-CE-0117538/00-20

Guidelines for setting up and running a women's refuge, Daphne Project 2003-2004, runned by Wave (Women Against Violence Europe), in partnership with 7 european countries, output: the manual "Away from Violence" translated in 5 european languages

Women and Security in the Cities, Daphne Project 1999, runned by FESU (Forum European on Urban Security, in partnership with Casa delle donne, Fundacio Maria Aurelia Capmany (Barcelona, Spagna), Associacao de Mulheres contra a violencia (Lisbona, Portogallo), Okumenische Asiengruppe (Francoforte, Germania), IFAFE (Arcueil, Francia), Hammersmith Women's Aid (Londra, Gran Bretagna).

Say no to Violence, Dafne Project 2002, Costruction of local and European Multiprofessional Network on Violence, runned by London borough of Croydon, in partnership with Casa delle donne per non subire violenza, Hackney's Women's Aid, Ambulatorio DH di medicina dei viaggi, del turismo e delle migrazioni of Palermo (Italy), and AUSL Bologna Municipality.

Sivic, Sensitization, Infomation and Traning for Professionals, Dafne Project 1999-2000. Web site http://www.sivic.org. runned by Istituto Umanitario (Francia), in partnership with Casa delle donne (Italy), Collectif de femmes battues (Belgique), Direcion General de los Asuntos de las Mujeres (Spagna), Associacao de Mulheres contra a violencia (Lisbona, Portogallo); output: a Manual of information for professionals translated in 4 european languages.

Italy, Bologna, September 2009