



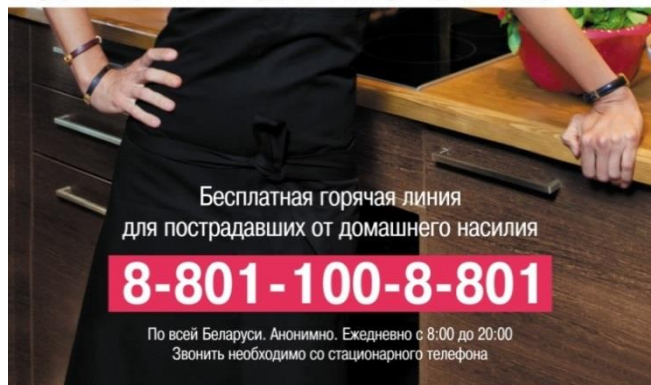
## Independent Evaluation

### UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women-Supported Project: “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in the Republic of Belarus”

Period covered: June 2012 – December 2014



**СЛЕЗЫ ТОЛЬКО ОТ ЛУКА**



Evaluation initiated by UNFPA Belarus Country Office

Conducted by independent evaluators

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|        |                                                                     |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BYWCA  | Belarusian Young Women Christian Association                        |
| CEDAW  | Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women       |
| CP     | Country programme                                                   |
| CPD    | Country programme document                                          |
| EQ     | Evaluation question                                                 |
| GDI    | Gender-related Development Index                                    |
| GII    | Gender Inequality Index                                             |
| GNP    | Gross National Product                                              |
| GoB    | Government of the Republic of Belarus                               |
| HDI    | Human Development Index                                             |
| HDR    | Human Development Report                                            |
| ICPD   | International Conference on Population and Development              |
| IOM    | International Organization for Migration                            |
| MDG    | Millennium Development Goal                                         |
| MoE    | Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus                    |
| MoH    | Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus                       |
| MIA    | Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus             |
| MLSP   | Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus |
| NAPGE  | National Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality               |
| NEX    | National execution                                                  |
| PIT    | Project Implementation Team                                         |
| SIDA   | Swedish International Development Cooperation                       |
| ToC    | Theory of Change                                                    |
| ToR    | Terms of reference                                                  |
| UN     | United Nations                                                      |
| UNCT   | United Nations country team                                         |
| UNDAF  | United Nations Development Assistance Framework                     |
| UNFPA  | United Nations Population Fund                                      |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund                                      |
| UNTF   | United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women             |
| UPR    | Universal Periodic Review                                           |

## Executive Summary

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF)-supported project “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in the Republic of Belarus”, implemented by UNFPA in collaboration with UNICEF and IOM, is the subject of this independent evaluation. Together with the SIDA-funded and UNFPA-implemented project “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in Belarus in the Context of Increased Gender Equality”, it is one of the first and only externally-assisted projects in the area of domestic violence in Belarus. The original project duration was 36 months, from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013. As a result of a long state registration process, the start of the project was delayed until June 2012. A no-cost extension was granted by the UNTF until 31 December 2014.

The total project budget was US\$1,081,609. Project interventions took place in the entire territory of Belarus, with a particular focus on three pilot districts of the Brest region. National partners were the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Regional Executive Committees of Brest, Kobryn and Kaminiec, as well as the NGOs Belarusian Young Women Christian Association (BYWCA) and Gender Perspectives. The MIA was the national executing agency.

A final external project evaluation is mandatory for all UNTF-funded projects/programmes. This final evaluation was initiated by the UNFPA Country Office in Belarus with the objective to “evaluate the entire project with a strong focus on evaluating results, the relevance, performance, management arrangements and success of the project” and to “look at signs of potential impact of project activities, outputs and outcomes on project beneficiaries and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity building”. The evaluation covers all aspects of the project from its beginning in June 2012 to its end in December 2014. It addresses the OEDC/DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and answers the following evaluation questions (EQs):

EQ1: To what extent does the project respond to priority needs of women and girls/children?

EQ2: To what extent is the project consistent with government priorities?

EQ3: To what extent has the project achieved/contributed to desired results?

EQ4: Which were the factors and conditions that facilitated or hindered progress?

EQ5: Were there any unplanned effects? Which ones?

EQ6: To what extent was the project implemented as scheduled and at planned costs? If not, why not?

EQ7: To what extent do project results justify the time and costs incurred?

EQ8: To what extent did the project coordinate with similar interventions to encourage synergies and avoid overlaps?

EQ9: What is the level of national and local ownership of the project?

EQ10: To what extent has the project capacitated national and local partners to maintain/replicate project benefits?

EQ11: Are funds likely to be made available to maintain/replicate benefits? If so, by whom?

The evaluation was conducted by two independent consultants. Data was gathered through a combination of methods, including desk review, semi-structured interviews and group discussions, and a short online survey of NGO beneficiaries. The data collection mission took place from 16 to 25 January. It ended with a debriefing on the evaluation team’s preliminary findings and conclusions. An evaluation matrix provided the overall analytical framework against which information and data was analysed by way of triangulating information obtained through the different data collection methods. No major limitations negatively affected the evaluation team’s assessment and credibility of its findings.

*Relevance findings:* The project responds to a serious but hidden problem in the Belarusian society. By way of seeking to raise the level of information and awareness on the one hand and supporting service providers on the other, the project has addressed very relevant rights and needs of women and children. It is also consistent with an increasing emphasis of the GoB on domestic violence against women as demonstrated by various amendments to legal provisions, the inclusion of a

separate chapter on domestic violence in the National Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality (NAPGE), and the government's plans to elaborate a comprehensive domestic violence law.

*Effectiveness findings:* The project has built a small but solid foundation for an inter-sectoral response to domestic violence. Feedback on trainings was overwhelmingly positive. Specialists were grateful for the international expertise provided in view of a dearth of information and in-depth debate on the topic in Belarus. A formal cooperation protocol provides the basis for cross-referrals in the pilot districts. NGO participation in the inter-sectoral teams was appreciated. Indeed, one of the project's greatest accomplishments was to have built trust between concerned state entities and NGOs. Initial experience with the cross-referral system and services is good with room for improvement. An increasing number of domestic violence cases are being assisted; however especially state assistance is of varying quality and legislative weaknesses potentially deter women from seeking assistance. Furthermore, judges and prosecutors are a missing link in the referral system; domestic violence case management is weak. Adopting domestic violence cooperation protocols is now an officially-recommended best practice for all districts. In support of this, higher and postgraduate educational institutions have institutionalized full domestic violence courses. However, stakeholders warned against proceeding too rapidly without the necessary guidance and support. The creation of a national hotline for domestic violence survivors and the strengthening of an existing national hotline for children in crisis are a further project contribution to increasing the number of entry points for domestic violence survivors and setting up a functioning inter-sectoral referral mechanism. Both hotlines are staffed, equipped and functioning.

The project also contributed to a much stronger consideration of domestic violence in national legislation and the introduction of new measures, based on international good practice. Specific positive mention was repeatedly made of the amended Prevention Law. A major - unplanned - effect is the intention of the GoB to develop a comprehensive domestic violence law and its interest in ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The project has also helped to generate new information and data on domestic violence against women and children, although legal aspects have delayed the planned unified information database. Survivors of domestic violence emphasised the utmost importance of discretion and safeguarding private and confidential client information. However, the evaluation team noted that not all confidential information is securely stored.

Through the creation of a national network, the project has empowered NGOs in their roles as advocates and service providers in the area of domestic violence. Five of the 17 NGOs responding to the evaluation online survey considered the NGO network to have been "very effective" and 11 "rather effective". Main accomplishments were considered to have been opportunities for networking, information exchange and training as well as the development of methodological materials, guidelines and standards. The extent to which such capacity building had already resulted in better quality services and more influence on national policies and practices was mentioned, but to a lesser degree.

It is not possible to assert that the project has sensitized more Belarusians to domestic violence concerns. However, the public information and advocacy campaign "Home without Violence" is widely known and appreciated. Moreover, thanks to the project, domestic violence is now an integral part of extra-curricular life skills education in Belarusian secondary schools.

*Sustainability findings:* The project has deepened the commitment of national stakeholders to prevent domestic violence and assist survivors. Their capacities and competencies to do so have improved, but more knowledge sharing is desired. NGOs and UNFPA are actively seeking external funding to complement state budgets.

*Efficiency findings:* It took around three years for project implementation to start, after which partners worked full speed. The overall project implementation rate is a very high 97.0%; 96.4% of received UNTF funds were spent. The evaluation team did not receive a definitive overview of line-item budgets, budget revisions and actual expenditures. Based on interviews and other document review, it is however not aware of any major deviations to the planned budget other than where outputs were dropped or added. Stakeholders felt that investments in terms of money and time



were worthwhile. Close coordination with the SIDA-funded project to counteract domestic violence created important synergies and efficiencies.

**Conclusions:** The UNTF-supported project was very relevant to needs, evolving priorities and international commitments of Belarus. Domestic violence is undoubtedly a huge problem in Belarus - as it is elsewhere in the world - which demands further attention. At the same time, other prominent inequalities should not be ignored, such as unequal allocation of household responsibilities, career development and gender wage gaps on the part of women, and health hazards, lower life expectancy and inequalities in child care, custody and support on the part of men. Ultimately, within a very short timeframe, the project achieved considerable results and changes, first and foremost in the three pilot districts, but also at the national level. All the while, it can be safely assumed that close coordination with the complementary SIDA-funded project was an important ingredient of success. Stakeholder ownership is high. Assuming no political set-backs to the current government's ambitions to tackle domestic violence, the national policy environment is conducive to building on and replicating achievements. New knowledge obtained has been institutionalized in district-level cooperation protocols and the curricula of secondary schools and national training institutes. A shortage of state funding at national and local levels due to the country's economic slowdown and competing demands could possibly turn out to be a critical threat to future benefits, although one not greatly thematised by stakeholders. The future of the NGO network appears unsure. While current network members generally appreciate its coming into existence, only few seem willing or able to contribute actively and/or monetarily. Nevertheless, a nucleus of active NGOs can be expected to thrive, in itself an important achievement. While the project did not neglect violence prevention, its emphasis was on ensuring the availability and use of reliable and confidential services for women or children already facing critical situations in their homes. While this is clearly relevant, interviews with survivors demonstrated all too evidently how difficult it is to escape domestic violence, recover from injuries and trauma, and, thus, how important prevention and early intervention is. Dismantling gender stereotypes and inequalities is an important prevention strategy, starting with children and young people; prevention and reduction of alcohol abuse and dependence also.

**Recommendations:** Building on project achievements and in view of future activities in the area of domestic violence and gender equality in Belarus, the evaluation team submits recommendations in the following areas:

1. Preparations for the new comprehensive domestic violence law are impending. UNFPA should urgently offer and make available support for elaborating the new law.
2. The GoB has started to roll out the domestic violence inter-sectoral referral mechanism at the district level. On request, UNFPA and UNICEF should provide support for replicating and further increasing its effectiveness.
3. The time is ripe for Belarus to address gender equality in a more systematic manner. In the absence of UN Women, UNFPA should play a key role.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF)-supported project: "Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in the Republic of Belarus"<sup>1</sup> is the subject of this independent evaluation.

In line with the UNTF guidelines, a final external project evaluation is mandatory for all UNTF-funded projects/programmes.<sup>2</sup> This final evaluation was initiated by the UNFPA Country Office in Belarus as the Administrative Agency for the project. The objective is to "evaluate the entire project with a strong focus on evaluating results, the relevance, performance, management arrangements and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the project document also: "Increasing of National Governance System Capacity for Prevention against Domestic Violence in the Republic of Belarus".

<sup>2</sup> Evaluation ToR.

success of the project”. The evaluation is expected to “look at signs of potential impact of project activities, outputs and outcomes on project beneficiaries and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity building”.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation covers all aspects of the project from its beginning in June 2012 to its end in December 2014.

## 1.2 EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

No major limitations negatively affected the evaluation team’s assessment and credibility of its findings.

## 1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted by two independent consultants, Ms. Alison King (contracted for 27 days) based in Switzerland and Mr. Sergei Gotin (lump sum contract) based in Belarus, working under the overall supervision of the project manager, Ms. Volha Lukashkova.<sup>4</sup> The international consultant was supported by an interpreter, Ms. Yekaterina Zayash. The evaluation took place between January and February 2015.

### Evaluation criteria and questions

As set out in the evaluation terms of reference (ToR) (see annex 1), the evaluation addresses the four OEDC/DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It answers the following key evaluation questions (EQs) - adapted from the evaluation ToR and grouped to make more manageable.

| Evaluation Criteria   | Key Evaluation Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Relevance</b>      | EQ1: To what extent does the project respond to priority needs of women and girls/children?<br>EQ2: To what extent is the project consistent with government priorities?                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>  | EQ3: To what extent has the project achieved/contributed to desired results?<br>EQ4: Which were the factors and conditions that facilitated or hindered progress?<br>EQ5: Were there any unplanned effects? Which ones?                                                                                    |
| <b>Efficiency</b>     | EQ6: To what extent was the project implemented as scheduled and at planned costs? If not, why not?<br>EQ7: To what extent do project results justify the time and costs incurred?<br>EQ8: To what extent did the project coordinate with similar interventions to encourage synergies and avoid overlaps? |
| <b>Sustainability</b> | EQ9: What is the level of national and local ownership of the project?<br>EQ10: To what extent has the project capacitated national and local partners to maintain/replicate project benefits?<br>EQ11: Are funds likely to be made available to maintain/replicate benefits? If so, by whom?              |

### Data collection and analysis

Data was gathered through a combination of methods:

- Desk review of documents and websites, including project progress reports and monitoring data (see annex 2);
- Briefings by and discussions with the UNFPA Belarus Assistant Representative, project manager and concerned project staff;

<sup>3</sup> Evaluation ToR.

<sup>4</sup> [king@kingzollinger.ch](mailto:king@kingzollinger.ch); [sergei@gotin.org](mailto:sergei@gotin.org); [lukashkova@unfpa.org](mailto:lukashkova@unfpa.org).

- Semi-structured interviews<sup>5</sup> with project partners in Belarus;
- Interviews/group discussions with indirect beneficiaries (specialists);
- Interviews/group discussions with direct (women) beneficiaries; and
- A short online survey of NGO network members, to which 17 of 19 network members responded (89% response rate).

The data collection mission to Minsk and the project pilot districts Brest, Kobryn and Kaminiec within the Brest region took place from 16 to 25 January (including travel). It ended with a debriefing on the evaluation team's preliminary findings and conclusions. The agenda for the data collection mission to Belarus can be found in annex 3.

An evaluation matrix (see annex 4) provided the overall analytical framework against which information and data was analysed by way of triangulating information obtained through the different above-mentioned data collection methods.

## 1.4 EVALUATION ETHICS

All requirements related to the independence, the prevention of conflicts of interest and respect for stakeholders' dignity and self-worth defined in the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines, and the UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System were duly observed. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies.

The consultants safeguarded the rights and confidentiality of information providers, included, but not limited to measures to ensure compliance with legal codes governing areas such as provisions to collect and report data, particularly permissions needed to interview or obtain information about children, youth and survivors of violence against women, provisions to store and maintain security of collected information, protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

## 1.5 EVALUATION REPORT OUTLINE

This introduction is followed by five chapters. While chapter 2 provides information about the context in which the project under evaluation was implemented, chapter 3 provides details of the project itself. Chapter 4 presents key evidence and the evaluation team's findings structured along the evaluation criteria relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. Chapter 5 contains the evaluation team's conclusions and chapter 6 its recommendations.

# CHAPTER 2: PROJECT CONTEXT

## 2.1 COUNTRY SITUATION

Belarus became an independent country in 1991. Since the 1990s, the population growth rate has been negative. In 2013, the population of Belarus was approximately 9.4 million.<sup>6</sup> The proportion of population living in urban areas has grown; in 2010 it reached 70%.<sup>7</sup> Rapidly rising morbidity rates and the spread of chronic diseases have resulted in low life expectancy at birth.<sup>8</sup> In 2013, life expectancy at birth was 64.2 years for men and 75.8 years for women.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> As advised by the UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation Handbook, interview guides did not contain specific questions but rather issues to be covered.

<sup>6</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/population-total-both-sexes-thousands>.

<sup>7</sup> Belarus ICPD Beyond 2014 Country Implementation Profile, July 2012.

<sup>8</sup> UNFPA Belarus CPD 2011-2015.

<sup>9</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/69206>.



According to the World Bank, Belarus is an upper middle-income country. GNP per capita was US\$ 6,730 in 2013; according to the national poverty line, 5.5% of the population were living in poverty.<sup>10</sup> Despite a reduction in poverty over the years, Belarus has a number of population groups that remain vulnerable to poverty, including families with three or more children, single-parent households, workers with a low level of education, and disabled people.<sup>11</sup>

Belarus ranked 53<sup>rd</sup> among 187 countries on the 2013 Human Development Index (HDI), and as such is considered to belong to the group of high human development countries<sup>12</sup>. According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belarus MDG Report (2010)<sup>13</sup>, the country has achieved almost all of the MDGs: It has almost met the targets for poverty eradication and reduction of maternal and child mortality. It has attained the goal of achieving universal primary education. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women was addressed in the Third National Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality (NAPGE) for the period 2008-2010. The report found the need for further efforts to enhance progress in achieving the goals of combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

Belarus ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> on the latest Gender-related Development Index (GDI)<sup>14</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> on the Gender Inequality Index (GII)<sup>15</sup>. Gender gaps persist in education and labour force participation.<sup>16</sup> For instance, women experience up to 25% wage gap compared to men's income.<sup>17</sup> According to reviewed documents<sup>18</sup>, domestic violence is the main gender-related issue, defined, according to the Prevention Law (see below), as "any deliberate act of physical, psychological or sexual assault committed by a family member against another family member that violates his/her rights, freedoms and legitimate interests and causing him/her physical and/or mental suffering".<sup>19</sup> Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, related to domestic violence both as root cause and consequence, is regarded as another severe form of violence prevalent in Belarus.<sup>20</sup>

Belarus ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 4 February 1981<sup>21</sup>; in 2004, it ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>22</sup>. In 2010, Belarus submitted its seventh periodic report.<sup>23</sup> In its concluding observations, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that the national machinery for the advancement of women remained weak in the absence of a specialized body for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality and of an independent national human rights institution. It recommended that the state party strengthen the capacity and financial and human resources of the National Council on Gender Policy, as well as of the Department of Population, Gender and Family Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and that it consider establishing an independent national human rights institution. The Committee also reiterated its concern about "the persistence of stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which over-emphasize the traditional

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<sup>10</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/country/belarus>.

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA Belarus CPD 2011-2015.

<sup>12</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi-table>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://un.by/en/undp/belarusmdgsreports/>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-related-development-index-gdi>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BLR>; 2009 CEDAW Shadow Report.

<sup>17</sup> "Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation". Produced for UNFPA in 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Such as: UNFPA Country Programme Document (CPD) for Belarus for the period 2011-2015; UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Belarus 2011-2015; „Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation“.

<sup>19</sup> Translated from Russian by evaluation team.

<sup>20</sup> Project document.

<sup>21</sup> [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?Treaty=CEDAW&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?Treaty=CEDAW&Lang=en).

<sup>22</sup> 2011 CEDAW Concluding Observations.

<sup>23</sup> A Shadow Report on the Implementation of CEDAW in Belarus is also available that contains a chapter on violence against women. Belarus was invited by the Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women in its 2011 Concluding Observations to submit its next periodic report in February 2015. The evaluation team was informed that the submission data has been postponed to 2016.

roles of women as mothers and spouses, undermine women's social status, and hamper their equal participation in political and economic life", and its grave concern about the persistence of discrimination and violence against women (see box 1), especially disadvantaged groups of women such as older women, women with disabilities, women belonging to minorities, including Roma women and lesbians. While noting that the State party gave high priority to combating trafficking in human beings, in particular women and children, the Committee remained concerned about the reported lack of preventive measures to address the root causes of trafficking, including prostitution, sexual exploitation and domestic violence.

**Box 1: Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women  
Concluding Observations on Violence against Women**

19. While noting the State party's efforts to sensitize the police and law enforcement officers on violence against women, the Committee reiterates its grave concern about the persistence of such violence, in particular domestic and sexual violence; its underreporting; the high number of women killed as a result of domestic violence; the lack of prosecution of violence within the family; the fact that rape is subject to private rather than ex officio prosecution; the absence of separate criminal law provisions on domestic violence and marital rape; and the lack of shelters for victims of domestic violence.

**20. In accordance with its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women and the recommendations contained in its previous concluding observations, the Committee urges the State party to:**

**(a) Intensify its efforts to prevent and prosecute acts of domestic and sexual violence against women and impose appropriate penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime on perpetrators rather than administrative fines which may have an adverse impact on the financial situation of victims themselves;**

**(b) Expedite the adoption of the draft Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, including specific rights for victims to assistance, protection and compensation;**

**(c) Amend its Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in order to specifically criminalize domestic violence and marital rape, introduce ex officio prosecution for rape, and ensure that the definition of rape covers any non-consensual sexual act;**

**(d) Provide mandatory training to judges, prosecutors and the police on the strict application of legal provisions dealing with violence against women and train police officers, on standardized procedures to deal with women victims of violence;**

**(e) Encourage women to report incidents of domestic and sexual violence, by de-stigmatizing victims and raising awareness about the criminal nature of such acts;**

**(f) Provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence, by strengthening the capacity of crisis rooms in territorial centres for social assistance, increasing the number of State-run shelters for battered women and girls, enhancing cooperation with and funding for NGOs providing shelter and rehabilitation to victims, and reinforcing rehabilitation programmes for alcoholic;**

**(g) Collect statistical data on domestic and sexual violence disaggregated by sex, age and relationship between the victim and perpetrator.**

*Source: 2011 CEDAW Concluding Observations.*

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Republic of Belarus took place in May 2010. During the UPR a number of states made recommendations to Belarus to continue governmental policies in the following areas: encouragement of social, economic and cultural rights of citizens; ensuring the rights of children; eradication of domestic violence; and strengthening cooperation between the state and non-governmental organisations in promoting human rights in education, health, gender equality, etc. The Republic of Belarus supported the majority of the recommendations formulated during the UPR. Belarus declared its readiness to further systematic work in the area of protection and

promotion of all kinds of human rights, to continue cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other interested international organizations to implement supported recommendations and to strengthen national capacity in human rights sphere.<sup>24</sup>

At the national level, no governmental body is assigned responsibility for coordinating nation-wide actions to address domestic violence. Neither does Belarus have a comprehensive law on domestic violence. Related provisions are contained in a number of policies and legal acts (see box 2):

| <b>Box 2: Domestic Violence Policies and Legislation in Belarus</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| •                                                                   | 2006 Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 18 on Additional Measures of State Protection of Children from Dysfunctional Families (Presidential Decree No. 18) |
| •                                                                   | 2008 Law on Basic Activities Aimed at Offence Prevention (Prevention Law), amended in 2014                                                                                     |
| •                                                                   | National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAPGE) 2011-2015                                                                                                                      |
| •                                                                   | Criminal Code                                                                                                                                                                  |
| •                                                                   | Administrative Offences Code                                                                                                                                                   |
| •                                                                   | Law on Social Services                                                                                                                                                         |

Source: Evaluation team.

Access to data on domestic violence is limited.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, many cases of violence go unreported.<sup>26</sup> A recent assessment of the domestic violence situation<sup>27</sup> provides a selection of official Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) statistics (see table 1). According to the MIA, domestic crimes and offences constituted one third of the total number taking place in households all over the country. Up to 90% were committed by offenders addicted to alcohol<sup>28</sup>; 88% were unemployed men.

| <b>Table 1: Number of crimes and administrative offences committed in the domestic/household domain<sup>29</sup></b> |        |        |        |        |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------|
| Articles of the Codes                                                                                                | 2010   | 2011   | 2012   | 2013   | January-August 2014 |
| <b>Criminal Code</b>                                                                                                 |        |        |        |        |                     |
| Art. 139. Murder                                                                                                     | 140    | 105    | 110    | 98     | 68                  |
| Art. 147. Deliberate causing of a severe bodily injury                                                               | 351    | 289    | 273    | 274    | 117                 |
| Art. 149. Deliberate causing of a less severe bodily injury                                                          | 127    | 82     | 83     | 101    | 49                  |
| <b>Code of Administrative Offences</b>                                                                               |        |        |        |        |                     |
| Art. 9.1. Deliberate causing of a bodily injury and other coercive actions                                           | 1,050  | 865    | 889    | 2,776  | 11,063              |
| Art. 9.3. Insult                                                                                                     | 1,018  | 1,186  | 1,119  | 1,301  | 931                 |
| Art. 17.1. Disorderly conduct                                                                                        | 41,225 | 35,171 | 29,502 | 28,659 | 14,883              |

Source: „Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation“. Produced for UNFPA in 2014.

The situation assessment also provides data on assistance provided to survivors of domestic violence:

<sup>24</sup> UNDAF for Belarus 2011-2015.

<sup>25</sup> UNDAF for Belarus 2011-2015.

<sup>26</sup> Project document.

<sup>27</sup> „Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation“. Produced for UNFPA in 2014.

<sup>28</sup> In the last two decades, alcohol consumption increased considerably in Belarus (source: UNECE Regional Report ICPD Beyond 2014: The UNECE Region's Perspective). In 2011, Belarus ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among 188 countries in alcohol consumption according to the World Health Organisation.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs.

According to information from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), 100 state-run crisis rooms assisted 176 victims of domestic violence during 2013-2014. During the same period, the three main non-state service providers assisted over 150 women domestic violence victims and their children (100). A national hotline for survivors of domestic violence established within the project under evaluation supported by the UNTF and managed by the NGO Gender Perspectives responded to around 6,000 phone calls related to domestic violence during 2012-2014.

A national survey conducted in 2014 as part of the UNTF-supported project under evaluation found that three of four Belarusians (both women and men) had experienced domestic violence in their life. Every third woman and every fourth man had suffered from physical violence. 37% of women and 28% of men had gone through economic violence; 18% of women and 12% of men through sexual violence. At the same time, 92% of men and 96% of women considered physical violence against their partners unacceptable. A comparison with 2008 national survey results suggests that tolerance toward some manifestations of domestic violence has increased: In 2014, legitimacy of economic violence among men toward women increased up to 25% comparing to 14% in 2008; sexual violence from 8% in 2008 to 18% in 2014; almost 14% of men believe that a male partner has a right to demand sexual contact while being drunk. Male respondents in 2014 also demonstrated double standards attitude with regard to domestic violence actions - while they do not accept violence of female partners against men, they justify male violence against female partners.<sup>30</sup>

Gender stereotypes among women and men play a significant role in justifying domestic violence. Data of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS-4 conducted by the National Statistical Committee and supported by UNICEF suggest that the reasons allowing violent behaviour against a woman in the family include: if she does not take proper care of children, if she demonstrates her independence and leaves the house without notifying her husband, if she opposes him, denies sex or burns food while cooking.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.2 THE UNITED NATIONS IN BELARUS

The work of the UN country team (UNCT) in Belarus is guided by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2015, its first joint strategy, prepared in consultation with the Government of Belarus (GoB) and other national as well as international partners.<sup>32</sup> The UNDAF expects to contribute to national priorities and the MDGs through five outcomes<sup>33</sup>:

- Sustainability of the social and economic development is supported
- People, especially vulnerable groups, are better protected from the risks detrimental to their health
- Environmental sustainability is increased
- Migration management, including border management, with safeguards to persons who need protection, is enhanced
- Effectiveness of the national governance system is enhanced

The UNCT and respective government ministries are currently in the process of developing a new UNDAF 2016-2020.

UN and international partner organizations participating in the UNTF-supported project under evaluation are the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

UNFPA assistance to Belarus began in 1994. The fund is currently implementing its first country programme for Belarus (2011-2015), which covers three focus areas: reproductive health and rights, population and development, and gender equality. The approved proposed budget is a total of US\$3.7 million composed of US\$2.3 million regular resources and US\$1.4 million other resources. The gender equality component has one outcome: prevention and protection systems are

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<sup>30</sup> „Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation“. Produced for UNFPA in 2014.

<sup>31</sup> „Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation“. Produced for UNFPA in 2014.

<sup>32</sup> UNDAF for Belarus 2011-2015.

<sup>33</sup> UNDAF for Belarus 2011-2015 Results Matrix.

established to reduce gender-based violence including domestic violence. It has two expected outputs: i) strengthened legal and organizational mechanisms to prevent domestic violence and support the victims of such violence; and ii) enhanced public knowledge and awareness of gender-based violence. The proposed budget for the gender equality component is a total of US\$1 million, composed of US\$100,000 regular resources and US\$900,000 other resources.<sup>34</sup>

UNICEF is currently implementing its 2011-2015 country programme, which covers social policy for children and system-strengthening for child well-being. The approved proposed budget is a total of US\$7.95 million composed of US\$3.75 million regular resources and US\$4.2 million other resources. The programme document envisages that “UNICEF, in collaboration with UNFPA, and other United Nations agencies and international organizations will continue to work on counteracting domestic violence”.<sup>35</sup>

Both UNFPA and UNICEF are in the process of elaborating their new country programmes for Belarus for the period 2016 to 2020.

The IOM office in Belarus was opened in December 1996 in Minsk. Over the recent years IOM Minsk has focused on the implementation of projects in such spheres as combating trafficking in persons, integrated border management, development of cross-border cooperation, improvement of the national legislative framework in the field of migration (with a total budget exceeding US\$5 million). Within its counter-trafficking project IOM provides direct reintegration and medical assistance, psychological and financial support to the victims of human trafficking; it also pays for legal services and training in specialized courses. With IOM’s financial support, in 2007, an International Training Centre on Migration and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was opened. The Centre regularly hosts a large number of trainings for national and international migration and law-enforcement agencies with foreign experts acting as trainers.<sup>36</sup>

## CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION SUBJECT

The UNTF-supported project: “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in the Republic of Belarus” is the subject of this independent evaluation. Together with the SIDA-funded and UNFPA-implemented project “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in Belarus in the Context of Increased Gender Equality”, it is to the evaluation team’s best of knowledge one of the first and only externally-assisted projects in the area of domestic violence in Belarus.

The original project duration was 36 months, from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013. As a result of a long state registration process, however, the start of the project was delayed until June 2012. A no-cost extension was granted by the UNTF until 31 December 2014.<sup>37</sup>

Project interventions were planned to take place in the entire territory of Belarus, with a particular focus on the three pilot districts of the Brest region - Moskovskiy district of Brest City, Kobryn district and Kaminiec district.<sup>38</sup> The Brest region has a population of 1,394,800, the equivalent of around 14.7% of the national total. About 47.2% of the region’s population are men; 52.8% women.<sup>39</sup> Brest city had a population of 310,800 in 2010; Kobryn 51,500 as of 1995; and Kaminiec 9,000 in 2002.<sup>40</sup> According to the project document, the Brest region is the “Western Gate” of Belarus, sharing a border with Poland, member of the European Union; economic development and migration are high; the officially registered unemployment rate is 0.8%, 0.1% higher than the national unemployment rate.

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<sup>34</sup> UNFPA Belarus CPD 2011-2015.

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF Belarus CPD 2011-2015.

<sup>36</sup> <http://iom.by/en/about-iom/office-in-belarus>.

<sup>37</sup> Evaluation ToR.

<sup>38</sup> Evaluation ToR.

<sup>39</sup> <http://landofancestors.com/travel/statistics/geography/236-territory-and-population-density-by-region-as-of-january-1-2011.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Wikipedia.

Besides the UN and international partner organizations participating in the project, national partners were the MIA, the MLSP, the Ministry of Health (MoH); the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Regional Executive Committees of Brest, Kobryn and Kaminič, as well as the NGOs Belarusian Young Women Christian Association (BYWCA) and Gender Perspectives. The MIA was the national executing agency.<sup>41</sup>

Women and girls were the intended direct beneficiaries of the project; indirect beneficiaries were professional groups - governmental officials, legal officers, uniformed personnel, social and health care providers, NGOs, the media - and the general public.<sup>42</sup>

The project was intended to contribute to UNDAF Outcome 5 “Effectiveness of the national governance system is enhanced” through agency outcome 5.1 “Capacity of the state bodies and organizations, local authorities to promote rights of citizens is increased”, in turn through contributing to agency output 5.1.6 “Strengthened legal and policy frameworks for prevention and protection against domestic violence is achieved”.

According to the project document, the *overall goal* of the project was to improve capacity to counteract and prevent domestic violence, especially against women and girls. Project activities were intended to contribute to 11 outputs and four outcomes.

Based on its understanding of the project logical framework, along with other reading, the evaluation team constructed a theory of change (ToC) showing the expected areas of change as the basis for its assessment of project performance (see annex 5). According to the ToC, in the long-term, the project is expected to contribute to decreased domestic violence and increased access to quality services for domestic violence survivors/witnesses, especially women and children. To this intent, in first instance, project activities and outputs were expected to lead to change at seven levels:

- ✚ Inter-sectoral domestic violence task forces and referral systems institutionalized in three districts of Brest region, including a unified information system
- ✚ Inter-sectoral child protection database institutionalized in three districts of Brest region
- ✚ New component on domestic violence prevention successfully tested in the Brest region as an integral part of secondary school life-skills education
- ✚ Professional knowledge and skills to address domestic violence, including its inter-relation with human trafficking, improved, including through incorporation of domestic violence in curricula of state higher and postgraduate educational institutions
- ✚ Country-wide network of NGOs for addressing domestic violence established
- ✚ Two national toll-free hotlines, one of which for domestic violence survivors and the other for children in crisis situations, established/strengthened
- ✚ More Belarusians, including parents, reached with information and messages on domestic violence

*Key activities and related outputs* to achieve these immediate outcomes are trainings; meetings and round tables; research & analysis; study tours; equipment; information & advocacy materials; manuals; an international conference; and a national survey (see annex 6 for related details).

If achieved, further along the ToC and more and more outside the project’s direct sphere of influence, the project intended for above outcomes to contribute to the following changes in policies and institutional practices:

- ✚ Mechanisms of inter-sectoral coordination and response to domestic violence strengthened in the whole of Belarus

*The expected decision by the concerned ministries to put in place inter-sectoral coordination and response mechanisms to domestic violence in all districts builds directly on developments and experience made in the three pilot districts of the Brest region. It also relates back to the project’s efforts to improve professional knowledge and skills to address domestic violence, the establishment of hotlines, and the incorporation of domestic violence in curricula of state higher and postgraduate educational institutions (see blue arrows).*

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<sup>41</sup> Project document.

<sup>42</sup> Evaluation ToR.



- ✚ Stronger consideration of domestic violence in national policies and legislation

*Stronger consideration of domestic violence in national policies and legislation is expected to follow from experience with inter-sectoral cooperation in the pilot districts, from improved professional knowledge and skills, from NGOs increasingly exercising their voice in public policy debates, from the increased sensitization of the population to the issue, and from the availability of more and better quality statistics and domestic violence-related information (see red arrows).*

- ✚ More and better information and statistical data on domestic violence available

*The unified info system, child protection database and hotlines introduced with the support of the project are expected to produce an increased level of information and statistics on domestic violence in Belarus. This, in turn, is expected to influence national policies and legislation (see green arrows).*

- ✚ Domestic violence prevention rolled out country-wide as an integral part of secondary school life-skills education

*The expected decision by the MoE to roll out domestic violence education as an integral part of the secondary school life-skills curricula builds directly on developments and experience made in the Brest region with the support of the project (see black arrow). Roll-out assumes that life-skills will remain part of secondary school education.*

- ✚ Stronger voice and response from the NGO sector to domestic violence

*Thanks to the new network of trained NGOs, the number of NGOs providing quality services to domestic violence survivors and their public voice are expected to increase, provided there is no worsening of the political/legislative environment for NGOs (see purple arrows).*

- ✚ More Belarusians, including parents, sensitized to domestic violence concerns

*Public information campaigns, materials for parents and sensitized media representatives are expected to influence attitudes and consequently behaviours in terms of preventing domestic violence and motivating individuals to demand and seek assistance (see orange arrows).*

The total *project budget* was US\$1,081,609. The following table 2 depicts commitments, allocations and expenditures per donor over the project period. Table 3 shows funds disbursed to and expended by the two non-governmental NEX implementing partners Gender Perspectives and BYWCA. Table 4 shows the value of equipment procured through the project.<sup>43</sup>

| <b>Table 2: Project Commitments, Allocations and Expenditures 2012-2014 in US\$</b> |                    |                         |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                                                                     | <b>Commitments</b> | <b>Amounts received</b> | <b>Actual expenditures</b> |
| <b>UNTF</b>                                                                         | 885,000            | 850,795 <sup>44</sup>   | 819,931 <sup>45</sup>      |
| <b>OSCE</b>                                                                         | 31,541             | 6,723 <sup>46</sup>     | 6,087                      |
| <b>UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM</b>                                                           | 165,068            | 169,096                 | 169,096                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                        | <b>1,081,609</b>   | <b>1,026,614</b>        | <b>995,114</b>             |

| <b>Table 3: NEX Disbursements and Expenditures 2012-2014 in US\$</b> |                          |                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                                                      | <b>Amounts disbursed</b> | <b>Actual expenditures</b> |
| <b>PN5810</b>                                                        | 161,841                  | 161,507                    |
| <b>PN5812</b>                                                        | 97,227                   | 95,584                     |
| <b>Total</b>                                                         | <b>259,068</b>           | <b>257,091</b>             |

<sup>43</sup> Source: Project Implementation Team (PIT).

<sup>44</sup> Difference is due to decreased 3<sup>rd</sup> tranche request.

<sup>45</sup> Including commitment of \$31 657 for evaluation and audit to be paid in year 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Amount was decreased due to some direct payments made by the donor.

| Table 4: Project Procurement 2012-2014 in US\$ |               |               |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                                | Planned       | Procured      |
| UNTF <sup>47</sup>                             | 6,000         | 4,066         |
| Participating agencies                         | 26,745        | 26,471        |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>32,745</b> | <b>30,537</b> |

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 RELEVANCE

The following chapter provides evaluation findings on the relevance criterion as well as underlying evidence. It is structured along evaluation questions 1 and 2 - i.e., relevance to priority needs of women and girls/children and relevance to government priorities.

**FINDING: THE PROJECT ADDRESSES THE RIGHT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BELARUS TO A LIFE WITHOUT VIOLENCE AND TO ASSISTANCE IN CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.**

Interviews and discussions with domestic violence survivors confirm the above documentation-based context analysis that domestic violence against women in its various forms is a serious problem in Belarus. Domestic violence arises from and is tolerated - or not even acknowledged - because of wide-spread gender stereotypes, both on the part of men and women, including decision-makers. It is caused by gender inequalities and power imbalances such as financial dependence, and is aggravated by excessive drinking and - according to some - missing conflict resolution skills and services. Children are all too often witnesses or even victims of domestic violence.<sup>48</sup>

As one of the first externally-funded projects in the area, the UNTF-supported project is seen to have responded to a common but hidden - taboo - problem in the Belarusian society. By way of seeking to raise the level of information and awareness on the one hand and supporting service providers on the other, the project is considered to have addressed very relevant rights and needs of women and children.

The United Nations MY World global survey for citizens, conducted as part of post-2015 development agenda debates, also serves to confirm the project's relevance: "protection against crime and violence" appears as the third-most important priority for women<sup>49</sup> following "better healthcare" and "a good education". Similarly, national post-2015 stakeholder consultations resulted in a gender equality-related recommendation that "inter-agency cooperation in provision of services to victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking ... be improved", and that "education and information campaigns on the theme of equality between men and women ... be organized"<sup>50</sup>.

**FINDING: THE PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH AN INCREASING EMPHASIS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.**

While trafficking in human beings is reportedly a longstanding priority of the GoB<sup>51</sup>, both documentary evidence and interviews reveal that this has not been the case for domestic violence.

<sup>47</sup> Activity 4.1.2 (hotline for children).

<sup>48</sup> According to the estimates of the National Statistics Committee of Belarus, one in three children aged 2 to 14 is subject to physical punishment. The figure for children aged between two and four reaches 47%. Only one third of children aged between 2 and 14 was brought up by non-violent means, without physical punishment and psychological pressure (quoted from [http://eng.belta.by/all\\_news/society/Belarus-launches-awareness-campaign-to-combat-violence-against-children\\_i\\_75611.html](http://eng.belta.by/all_news/society/Belarus-launches-awareness-campaign-to-combat-violence-against-children_i_75611.html)).

<sup>49</sup> <http://data.myworld2015.org/?country=Belarus>. 4,390 female survey respondents as of 2 February 2015.

Protection against crime and violence ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> for those aged 15 and below.

<sup>50</sup> Equality between men and women only ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in the MY World survey.

<sup>51</sup> Based on 2005 Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 3 on Certain Measures Aimed to Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2005 Edict of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 352 on Measures to

However, numerous interviewees expressed their satisfaction and even appreciation for the GoB's increasing attention to domestic violence compared to only a few years ago as also demonstrated by various amendments to legal provisions building on the first definition of domestic violence in the above-mentioned Prevention Law and the inclusion of a separate chapter on domestic violence in the NAPGE. Stakeholders greatly welcome the government's recent plans to elaborate a comprehensive domestic violence law as an opportunity to consolidate separate legal provisions, correct remaining weaknesses and introduce new measures (see box 3).

**Box 3: Opportunities for Further Improving Domestic Violence Legislation in Belarus According to Individual Interviewees**

- Remove differences in the regulatory framework.
- Harmonize current inconsistencies in legal provisions, including such concerning police and child rights protection institutions.
- Improve legislation to protect DV victims, including Presidential Decree No. 18 on child protection.
- It is difficult to take non-physical violence cases to court.
- Administrative fines do not make sense.
- Fines and child custody amount to a double punishment.
- Address issue of confidential information exchange between concerned institutions.
- Enshrine cross-referral system in new law.
- Ensure that new law enables data sharing.
- Replicate referral system with the involvement of NGOs.
- Enshrine inclusion of NGOs in referral system, including data sharing.
- Institutionalize NGO participation in referral system.

*Source: Evaluation team*

## 4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The following chapter provides evaluation findings on the effectiveness criterion as well as underlying evidence. It is structured along the above-mentioned anticipated outcomes in terms of expected changes in policies and institutional practices.

### **Mechanisms of inter-sectoral coordination and response to domestic violence strengthened in the whole of Belarus**

#### **FINDING: THE PROJECT HAS BUILT A SMALL BUT SOLID FOUNDATION FOR A FUNCTIONING INTER-SECTORAL RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BELARUS**

As the evaluation team was able to establish, despite initial hesitations due to limited understanding and time, inter-sectoral teams representing district-level entities of the MIA, MLSP, MoH and MoE have been established and are meeting<sup>52</sup> in each of the three project pilot districts. A formal cooperation protocol, including an informed consent form for signature by domestic violence survivors, provides the basis for cross-referrals in each of the districts, coordinated by the territorial centre for social assistance under the MLSP.

#### *NGO participation is appreciated*

While NGOs are not signatories to the protocols, in two of the three districts they were experienced by the evaluation team as active members of the inter-sectoral teams. Enquiries revealed that their participation was appreciated, and that, compared to state authorities, NGOs were acknowledged by

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Protect Victims of Trafficking; and 2006 Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 18 on Additional Measures of State Protection of Children from Dysfunctional Families.

<sup>52</sup> According to PIT monitoring data as of December 2014, teams met 7 times during 2012/2013 and six times in 2014. Interviewees explained that members also met on an as needed basis.

tendency to enjoy considerable trust and to be more flexible. However they were seen to have fewer resources.

Some interviewees, including senior officials, suggested that the planned comprehensive domestic violence law (see below) should consider institutionalizing NGO participation in inter-sectoral mechanisms. In this regard, a number of both state and NGO representatives mentioned the - as yet unprecedented - possibility for district authorities to directly commission the assistance of NGOs in the area of domestic violence under the Social Order as part of the very recent Law on Social Services<sup>53</sup>, provided they make local budgets available.

#### *The use of national and international expertise proved valuable in different ways*

Feedback on trainings was overwhelmingly positive.<sup>54</sup> State and NGO specialists were grateful for the international expertise provided in view of a dearth of information and in-depth debate on the topic in Belarus. Moreover, state specialists overwhelmingly stated that one of the project's greatest accomplishments - through common workshops, trainings and other events - was to have acquainted specialists from the different involved state structures with each other as well as built trust between state entities and NGOs whose representatives had often functioned as national experts/trainers within the project.

#### *Experience with the cross-referral system and services provided is good with room for improvement*

Interviewees considered the cross-referral system to be working well - as one interviewee in Kaminič district said - given its "embryonic stage" - with an increasing number of cases being assisted.<sup>55</sup> A positive trend was seen by some to be the increasing number of women making first contact with the territorial centres<sup>56</sup> (rather than the police) and using territorial centre crisis rooms in acute cases<sup>57</sup>.

Domestic violence survivors interviewed by the evaluation team generally expressed their satisfaction with NGO-provided services. They expressed mixed experience with state support, particular from police officers, and commented on legislative weaknesses with the potential to influence decisions to seek support such as administrative fines and the possibility of children being placed in state custody. A particular missing link considered to affect the effectiveness of the referral system, revealed by both specialists and survivors, was the attitudes, professional knowledge and skills of representatives of judges and prosecutors. Moreover, based on a range of interviews, including with domestic violence survivors, the evaluation team found support by responding state specialists to be reactive rather than pro-active or preventive. It also identified weaknesses in terms of domestic violence case management by the territorial centres.

#### *Adopting cooperation protocols is a recommended best practice for all 118 districts of Belarus*

Belarus is divided into six regions (oblasts) with further subdivision into 118 districts.<sup>58</sup> As part of implementing the amended Prevention Law, the collegium of the MLSP, in 2014, recommended replicating the cooperation protocol throughout Belarus. Furthermore, the protocol was introduced as a best practice for the local level in the re-training manuals and guidelines of the MIA, MLSP, MoE and MoH (see below).

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<sup>53</sup> The Law on Social Services was published on 13 June 2012; it came into force on 1 January 2014.

<sup>54</sup> As part of activities to set up inter-sectoral task forces and referral systems, the project conducted 13 trainings for some 500 participants (source: PIT). In addition, in 2012/2013, it organized a series of inter-sectoral trainings in different regions of Belarus on links between domestic violence and trafficking. See annex 6 for details.

<sup>55</sup> According to PIT monitoring data as of December 2014, a total of 187 persons were provided assistance in 2013 and 203 persons in 2014.

<sup>56</sup> For instance, while 31 domestic violence survivors directly contacted the territorial centre in Kobryn in 2013, the number grew to 85 in 2014 (source: territorial centre). In Kaminič district, the territorial centre was not contacted for assistance in cases of domestic violence in 2012/2013; it was directly contacted in 12 cases in 2014 (source: territorial centre). According to MIA, the percentage of calls to police versus territorial centres was 100 to 1 before creating the referral system; now it is around 100 to 20-25.

<sup>57</sup> For instance in Moskovskiy district of Brest City - 2011: 1 victim, 2012: 2 victims, 2013: 14 victims, 2014: 28 victims (source: territorial centre); in Kobryn - 2012: 0, 2013: 13 (source: MLSP).

<sup>58</sup> <http://archives.gov.by/eng/index.php?id=989746>.

A number of interviewees, however, warned against proceeding too rapidly. To be successful, they emphasized the need to adapt protocols to local circumstances, to attain high-level support and to ensure that specialists dispose of the necessary understanding, professional knowledge and skills. No statistics are available on the number of districts to have introduced the innovation.

#### *Domestic violence training programmes have been institutionalized*

With regard to replicating knowledge and skills for addressing domestic violence in other regions and districts of Belarus as part of the referral system, the evaluation team was able to confirm through interviews that - building on training programmes and manuals developed by the project and facilitated by the PIT<sup>59</sup> - the higher and postgraduate educational institutions of the MIA, MLSP, MoH and MoE have jointly designed full courses on domestic violence. Such courses have meanwhile been formally introduced in their respective curricula, but are anticipated to take some years to show tangible results in terms of coverage. In addition, interviews revealed that, while courses included session(s) on inter-sectoral cooperation in the area of domestic violence, the educational institutions, for budgetary reasons, were not in the position to offer inter-sectoral trainings and re-trainings such as was appreciated by specialists in the three project pilot districts.

#### *Two national hotlines are equipped and working as part of the referral system*

The creation of a (non-governmental) national hotline for domestic violence survivors<sup>60</sup> and the strengthening of an existing (state-run) national hotline for children in crisis are a further project contribution to increasing the number of entry points for domestic violence survivors and setting up a functioning inter-sectoral referral mechanism in Belarus. The evaluation team was able to establish that both hotlines are staffed, equipped and functioning 12/7 and 24/7 respectively, and that specialists interviewed greatly appreciated support provided by the project.<sup>61</sup> While the domestic violence hotline is toll-free, the one for children is not. Hotline staff considered this an “obstacle”, but not a “problem”. Services are reported to be free of charge for callers. According to information provided to the evaluation team, the hotline for children responds to 5,000 to 6,000 calls a year<sup>62</sup>; the domestic violence hotline has catered to around 6,000 calls since its establishment in August 2012.<sup>63</sup> The evaluation methodology did not envisage assessing the quality of assistance provided.

### **Stronger consideration of domestic violence in national policies and legislation**

**FINDING: A MAJOR - UNPLANNED - EFFECT OF THE PROJECT IS THE INTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW AND ITS INTEREST IN RATIFYING THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION.**

Numerous interviews, including with senior officials, confirmed that the project’s efforts, particularly to improve professional knowledge and skills, have not only motivated individuals, but also contributed to - or as one interviewee put it “accelerated” - a much stronger consideration of domestic violence in national legislation and the introduction of new measures<sup>64</sup>, based on international good practice. Specific positive mention was repeatedly made of the amended Prevention Law, which entered into force in April 2014, enshrined inter-sectoral domestic violence referral mechanisms, and envisages, *inter alia*, the possibility for law enforcement to issue protection orders.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the evaluation team learnt from interviewees that, informed and motivated by the project, the MIA and MLSP have been tasked by the Deputy Prime Minister to develop a concept for

<sup>59</sup> Amongst other things, in November 2014, UNFPA organized a workshop for tutors of re-training and professional development educational establishments (source: PIT). See annex 6 for details.

<sup>60</sup> National toll-free hotline: 8-801-100-8-801.

<sup>61</sup> One training for domestic violence hotline survivors; three trainings for child crisis hotlines operators, one of which in Moscow (source: PIT). See annex 6 for details.

<sup>62</sup> PIT monitoring data as of December 2014: 4,683 calls were received in 2013; 3,800 in 2014.

<sup>63</sup> PIT monitoring data as of December 2014: 777 calls in 2012; 2,960 in 2013; and 1,601 in 2014.

<sup>64</sup> See also Steering Committee minutes 31.7.2014.

<sup>65</sup> However, currently, the punishment for non-compliance with restraining orders is not regulated (source: “Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation”).

a comprehensive domestic violence law by May 2015. The new law, planned to be included in the law-making plan of the national parliament in 2016<sup>66</sup>, is expected to take into consideration the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which the GoB is reportedly considering signing and ratifying at a later point in time.

On the other hand, no reference was found to the project's role in including domestic violence in the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAPGE) and annual work plans or in the adoption by the Supreme Court of a "decision on domestic violence as guideline for judiciaries", indicators of the project's success as per the project logical framework.

### **More and better information and statistical data on domestic violence available**

**FINDING: THE PROJECT IS HELPING TO GENERATE NEW INFORMATION AND DATA ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ALTHOUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF A UNIFIED INFORMATION DATABASE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS DELAYED. NOT ALL CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IS SECURELY STORED.**

#### *Legal aspects have held up the creation of a unified information database on domestic violence*

In terms of sharing information on domestic violence cases amongst concerned actors, the project first and foremost envisaged the creation and piloting of a unified information database on domestic violence in the three pilot districts with a view to it being used in the whole of Belarus as part of the inter-sectoral referral system. However, according to Steering Committee minutes and interviewees, this line of activity was dropped for lack of the necessary legislative basis for sharing information amongst different entities. Those expressing a view agreed that such a database could be useful in future<sup>67</sup>; however information exchange through personal contacts was already satisfactory. Furthermore, thought would need to be given to the scope of the database (which cases to record) as well as responsibilities and capacities for feeding the database and follow up.

Nonetheless, thanks to the informed consent form introduced as part of the cooperation protocol, it is now possible to know how many (potential) domestic violence survivors agree to call on the referral system for assistance. For instance, according to the territorial centre, the number of informed consents in Kobryn increased from 21 in 2013 to 56 in 2014; in Kaminič, it increased from 0 in 2013 to 12 in 2014.

#### *Pilot districts are testing an inter-sectoral child protection database*

As a forerunner to the unified information database, the project supported the introduction of an inter-sectoral child protection database in support of the Presidential Decree No. 18.<sup>68</sup> The evaluation team was informed that the database had been or was just about to be installed with the intended users in the three pilot districts; it was able to observe that it is being used.

While specialists interviewed had had no opportunity to influence the database, they were largely satisfied with the product, although a number found the interface not to be user friendly, which the evaluation team confirmed. The evaluation team also revealed that the new database does not cover all official reporting requirements, thus requiring concerned specialists to enter data in two places, an issue UNICEF is about to correct soon. The added value of the new database over existing data collection methods was mentioned as i) inter-sectoral access; ii) more comprehensive information; iii) more efficient updating of information; and iv) availability of real-time information. UNICEF is reportedly monitoring implementation of the database. The intention is for the MoE to roll it out to other districts. This, however, similarly to the unified information system discussed above, requires amendments to the legislation.

#### *The availability and reliability of MIA data is expected to improve*

Furthermore, in addition to what was envisaged, in 2014, the Steering Committee decided to support the creation of a comprehensive computerized database for improving the availability and reliability

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<sup>66</sup> "Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation".

<sup>67</sup> See also Steering Committee minutes 31.7.2014.

<sup>68</sup> With additional funding provided by UNICEF (source: Steering Committee minutes 14.1.2015).



of MIA data. At the time of the data collection mission, first experience was being made at national and district levels with the continued support from UNICEF. It is expected to be launched by March 2015.<sup>69</sup>

#### *National hotlines are another valuable source of primary information on domestic violence*

As already mentioned above, the project helped to establish one and strengthened another national hotline. They are considered a further valuable source of statistics, information and analysis on domestic violence in Belarus. Last but not least, in 2014, the project conducted a second national survey on domestic violence, together with the Belarusian sociological company “NOVAK”.

#### *The assurance of confidentiality is central to survivors seeking assistance - not all confidential information is securely stored*

With regard to seeking assistance through the referral system, a constant topic in discussions with domestic violence survivors was their shame and fear, especially in small rural communities; fear of more aggression, of rumours, judgement and a ruined reputation, of social isolation, of poverty, and of losing their children. They emphasised the utmost importance of discretion and safeguarding private and confidential client information when dealing with their cases and using/sharing information. With regard to privacy and data protection, the evaluation team was able to assert that the domestic violence hotline database and child protection database were both sufficiently protected by individual access codes; data on domestic violence cases stored in Microsoft Word and Excel documents at the territorial centres were not<sup>70</sup>.

### **Domestic violence prevention rolled out country-wide as an integral part of secondary school life-skills education**

#### **FINDING: THANKS TO THE PROJECT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN BELARUSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

The secondary school curricula in Belarus include extra-curricular<sup>71</sup> classes on life skills. Schools are obliged to teach life skills to 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils; it is voluntary in the case of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> grade students. In collaboration with the MoE, the National Institute of Education and the NGO Children are Not for Violence, the project designed and tested in the pilot districts a teacher manual and teaching materials on domestic violence as part of secondary school life skills education. Educators interviewed in the pilot districts expressed their satisfaction with the documentation, although they had not been part of its development, and their intention to use it in class. One group explained that while information on the topic was abundant, the project had been “enabling” by way of consolidating and deepening their information base.

The evaluation team was informed that at the end of 2014, building on the experience in the pilot districts, the MoE had included the topic of domestic violence in the life skills course curriculum and had approved the documentation, which it was printing for distribution nation-wide.

### **Stronger voice and response from the NGO sector to domestic violence**

#### **FINDING: THE PROJECT HAS EMPOWERED NGOS IN THEIR ROLES AS ADVOCATORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.**

The project facilitated the creation of a national network of NGOs on the prevention of domestic violence, coordinated by BYWCA.<sup>72</sup> The network includes all NGOs addressing domestic violence in Belarus - 19 NGOs in all - with good coverage of the regions.<sup>73</sup>

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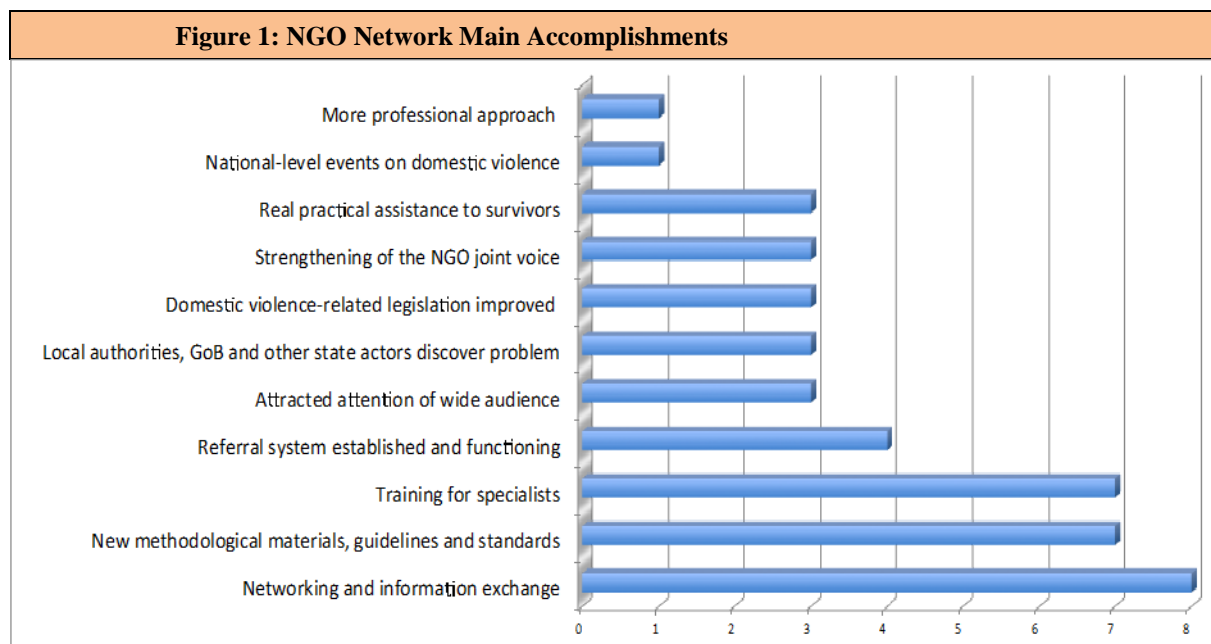
<sup>69</sup> Source: PIT monitoring data as of December 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Not a component of the project under evaluation.

<sup>71</sup> Extra-curricular activities are not part of the regular school curriculum and are not graded.

<sup>72</sup> Amongst other things, seven trainings were organized by BYWCA in Minsk (source: PIT). See annex 6 for details.

Five of the 17 NGOs responding to the online survey consider the NGO network to have been “very effective” and 11 “rather effective”. Figure 1 depicts what are seen to have been the network’s main accomplishments<sup>74</sup> - first and foremost the creation of opportunities for networking, information exchange and training as well as the development of methodological materials, guidelines and standards. The extent to which such capacity building has already resulted in better quality services on the one hand and more influence on national policies and practices on the other is mentioned, but to a lesser degree.



Source: NGO network survey

#### ✚ More Belarusians, including parents, sensitized to domestic violence concerns

**FINDING:** IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ASSERT THAT THE PROJECT HAS SENSITIZED MORE BELARUSIANS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONCERNS. HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY THE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN “HOME WITHOUT VIOLENCE” IS WIDELY KNOWN AND APPRECIATED.

The project designed and conducted two parts of a three-part public information and advocacy campaign<sup>75</sup>, together with and approved by the MIA - i.e., “Kitchen without Violence” and “Playroom without Violence” as part of the overall slogan “Home without Violence”. At the time of the data collection mission, the third part of the campaign “Bedroom without Violence”, targeting male aggressors, was under preparation, reportedly with funding from the above-mentioned SIDA-funded project. Interviewees, including domestic violence survivors, confirmed the importance of bringing increased public attention to domestic violence and to changing people’s mentality. Frequently, they referred to the project’s campaign on their own accord. Two groups of domestic violence survivors emphasized the benefits of including the domestic violence hotline number in the “Kitchen without Violence” campaign materials; they also expressed the view that individuals will pay more attention to campaigns only once they find themselves in a critical situation.

The project did not monitor the impact of the campaign. Although hard evidence is missing, many interviewees expressed their personal feeling that - as one put it - the campaign had “incentivized women to be more attentive and more active”. Mention was made, for instance, of calls to the domestic violence hotline and more requests to use territorial centre crisis rooms.

<sup>73</sup> Seven of the 19 network members are based in Minsk. Four of six oblast cities are represented - i.e., Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev, and Brest. Seven NGOs are located in small cities - i.e., Mozyr, Smorgon, Kobryn, Pinsk, Borisov, Novopolock, and Bobruisk.

<sup>74</sup> Multiple responses were possible.

<sup>75</sup> See annex 6 for details on communication materials produced by the project.

In terms of outreach and access to information, the project also supported the renovation of the website <http://ostanovinasilie.org/><sup>76</sup> and its transfer from the United Nations to BYWCA. According to statistics received from BYWCA, the website was visited more than 38,700 times between October 2012 and December 2014, the most popular pages viewed being news, blog posts and online consultations. The project also conducted trainings for media representatives<sup>77</sup> and invited the winner of a competition for journalists to join a study tour to Israel. Interviewed journalists demonstrated a deep understanding of domestic violence issues, causes and consequences and showed further interest in the topic. A key competence obtained, as emphasized during the group discussion, was the ability to formulate questions about gender equality and domestic violence and to incorporate such aspects into other topics.

More specifically, in collaboration with the NGO Children are Not for Violence, a special brochure was produced for parents to be distributed through school teachers in the pilot districts.<sup>78</sup> Messages were also broadcasted as part of the “Playroom without Violence” campaign on five national TV channels and located on [www.detskaya.unicef.by](http://www.detskaya.unicef.by).<sup>79</sup> However, neither educators nor domestic violence survivors (mothers) highlighted its existence or particular usefulness. Neither did the evaluation team learn about any plans for the MoE to print more for use throughout other areas of the country.

### 4.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The following chapter provides evaluation findings on the sustainability criterion as well as underlying evidence. Along the evaluation questions, it explores sustainability in terms of ownership, capacities and competencies, and funding availability.

#### **FINDING: THE PROJECT HAS DEEPENED COMMITMENT TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ASSIST SURVIVORS.**

Ownership of project processes and results were generally revealed to be high at the national level and in the three pilot districts. In line with their mandates to prevent and prosecute crimes and offenses and to assist domestic violence survivors, the MIA and MLSP were seen to be taking a leading role in the domestic violence referral system compared to MoH and MoE representatives.<sup>80</sup> Notwithstanding roles played, the evaluation team did not encounter any stakeholder who did not express his or her appreciation for changes achieved or initiated. As mentioned above, the extensive use of national expertise in research and training was highlighted as a particular positive feature in this regard. In Minsk, stakeholders specifically referenced the importance of having created a committee, involving both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, dedicated to steering the project.

The GoB has taken important steps to roll out inter-sectoral cooperation in all 118 districts, to institutionalize full domestic violence courses in state higher and post-graduate education institutions, and to introduce domestic violence as part of extra-curricular classes in secondary school. The clearest sign of ownership is seen in the recent amendments to national legislation with the introduction of new instruments to address domestic violence in the whole of Belarus, as well as the intention of the GoB to develop a comprehensive domestic violence law in line with the Istanbul Convention. On the other hand, the evaluation team found that investments in the child protection database - awaiting amendment to legislation and GoB decision to expand to other districts - are not yet sustainable.

NGOs would like to continue to benefit from a domestic violence network. All 17 NGOs responding to the survey expressed their wish to be part of a mailing list and other forms of information exchange. 16 expressed their readiness to participate in activities organized by the network, and 11 to invite

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<sup>76</sup> “Stop Violence against Women”.

<sup>77</sup> Two trainings were conducted in Minsk with a total of 68 participants (source: PIT). See annex 6 for details.

<sup>78</sup> According to monitoring data 5,000 copies were produced. See annex 6 for details.

<sup>79</sup> Source: PIT monitoring data as of December 2014.

<sup>80</sup> This is confirmed, for instance, in “Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation”.

other network members to their own activities. On the other hand, only half are willing to play an active role in sustaining the network by way of organizing and hosting network activities.

**FINDING: CAPACITIES AND COMPETENCIES TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAVE IMPROVED THANKS TO THE PROJECT, BUT MORE KNOWLEDGE SHARING IS DESIRED.**

All interviewees felt that their capacities<sup>81</sup> and competencies to continue addressing domestic violence had improved thanks to the project. At the same time, the single most made recommendation, also reflected in the NGO survey, was to continue providing opportunities for learning and practical exposure. In this regard, project partners regretted that the no-cost extension by the UNTF until December 2014 rather than June 2015 had cut short learning opportunities.

The problem of staff turnover within state entities at district level was mentioned now and again, but was expected to be eventually offset by the institutionalization of full domestic violence courses in the curricula of concerned state higher and post-graduate education institutions as well as the availability of the cooperation protocol as well as training manuals and materials. As mentioned above, stakeholders saw the need for a special effort to motivate and train specialists in those districts replicating the new inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism.

**FINDING: NGOS AND UNFPA ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING EXTERNAL FUNDING TO COMPLEMENT STATE BUDGETS**

Bar the fact that dedicated funding is not available for implementing the NAPGE<sup>82</sup> the evaluation team was not made aware of any critical budget limitations at ministry and district levels severely restricting the continuation of project activities and implementation of legislative regulations.

As mentioned above, the evaluation brought to light the new possibility for local authorities to sub-contract NGOs to provide domestic violence-related services under the Social Order as part of the Law on Social Services. For the time-being, NGOs and the newly-established domestic violence NGO network remain almost totally dependent on foreign funding. In 2014, a small circle of five NGOs succeeded in raising funds from the New Eurasia Establishment<sup>83</sup> for continuing the domestic violence NGO network. This is crucial in terms of sustainability of the network - while 12 respondents to the NGO survey indicated their willingness to provide in-kind contributions to the network, only seven affirmed the possibility of paying a membership fee.

“To bring activities to their logical end” - as one interviewee said - UNFPA has developed and submitted to potential donors a new project proposal for 2016-2019 for further improving national legislation on gender-based violence; developing and institutionalizing national domestic violence response mechanisms; strengthening state entities and NGOs; and engaging men in gender equality mainstreaming. To the evaluation team’s best of knowledge, responses were pending at the time of writing.

## **4.4 EFFICIENCY**

This chapter provides evaluation findings on the efficiency criterion as well as underlying evidence. Along the relevant evaluation questions, it assesses aspects related to timeliness and costliness as well as the extent to which the project was coordinated with similar interventions.

**FINDING: IT TOOK AROUND THREE YEARS FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TO START, AFTER WHICH PARTNERS WORKED FULL SPEED.**

The project proposal was submitted to the UNTF as part of the 2009 call for proposals. The original project duration was 36 months, from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013. In October 2010, the

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<sup>81</sup> As mentioned above, the project also procured equipment, inter alia for the two hotlines, the child protection database and the MOI database, amounting to US\$ 30,537 (3.1% of total expenditures) (see table 4).

<sup>82</sup> See, for instance, “Domestic Violence in Belarus: Assessment of the Situation”.

<sup>83</sup> <http://eurasia.by/>.

UNTF announced new grants, including for Belarus.<sup>84</sup> Due to a longer than expected state registration (official approval) process, full-fledged project implementation was delayed by 18 months. The project was officially registered with the Ministry of Economy on 4 June 2012<sup>85</sup>; the first Steering Committee meeting took place on 18 July 2012.

Other than delays and carry overs due to this late start - e.g., the third part of the “Home without Violence” campaign - the evaluation team was not made aware of any significant delays. On the contrary: The PIT and project partners worked under pressure to deliver in a shorter timeframe than envisaged. The no-cost extension granted by the UNTF until end December 2014 gave some respite, but did not fulfil national expectations that the project would continue until June 2015.<sup>86</sup>

#### *Very high project implementation rate*

As seen in table 2 above, the overall project implementation rate is a very high 97.0%; 96.4% of received UNTF funds were spent. The two NEX implementing partners, Gender Perspectives and BYWCA, spent 99.2% of monies received over the project period (see table 3). While not causing any delays in implementation, interviews revealed that having to comply with UNFPA’s financial rules and regulations, besides the rigorous domestic legislation in Belarus that NGOs are simultaneously bound by, was a time-intensive exercise requiring double bookkeeping.

#### FINDING: STAKEHOLDERS FEEL THAT INVESTMENTS (FINANCIAL, TIME) WERE WORTHWHILE

The evaluation team did not receive from the PIT a definitive overview of line-item budgets, budget revisions and actual expenditures for 2012, 2013 and 2014. Based on interviews and other document review, it is however not aware of any major deviations to the planned budget other than where outputs - such as the unified information system - were dropped or added - e.g., the child protection database (see effectiveness section above). Accumulated cost savings were re-allocated by the project’s Steering Committee - e.g., to establish the MIA database.

Overall, stakeholders providing a view considered their time to have been well invested and the project to have provided value for money.

#### FINDING: CLOSE COORDINATION WITH A PROJECT FUNDED BY SIDA AND IMPLEMENTED BY UNFPA TO COUNTERACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CREATED IMPORTANT SYNERGIES AND EFFICIENCIES

The project under evaluation was closely coordinated with the SIDA-funded project “Developing National Capacity to Counteract Domestic Violence in Belarus in the Context of Increased Gender Equality”, ongoing until June 2015. It is the only other known externally-funded project in the area of domestic violence known to the evaluation team. This second project was specifically developed to complement the UNTF-funded project by way of strengthening territorial centre crisis rooms in the same pilot districts (Brest, Kobryn and Kaminiec), working with mass media and faith-based organizations on gender-based violence and gender equality issues, and piloting work with male domestic violence perpetrators. The MLSP is the national executing agency.

Evidence revealed that this set-up allowed for the creation of important synergies and efficiencies. First and foremost, both projects have been implemented by the same PIT located in the UNFPA offices. Further examples encountered are the mingling of funds for information campaigns, trainings and study tours; joint support for journalists; a joint Steering Committee meeting in January 2014; and a more effective referral system thanks to equipped crisis rooms and trained faith-based organizations. Indeed, a number of interviewees had difficulties distinguishing between the two projects given their close inter-linkages in programmatic terms and in view of the overlapping project partners, indirect and direct beneficiaries. The new project proposal mentioned above would ensure the continuation of initiatives under both projects.

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<sup>84</sup> <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36357#.VNDIXRHwv3g>.

<sup>85</sup> Minutes of Steering Committee meeting on 18 July 2012.

<sup>86</sup> The project had been officially registered for 36 months as originally envisaged - i.e., until June 2015.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The UNTF-supported project was very relevant to needs, evolving priorities and international commitments of Belarus. It has also provided a valuable starting point for the GoB, together with its development partners to address further gender inequalities in the Belarusian society. Domestic violence is undoubtedly a huge problem in Belarus - as it is elsewhere in the world - which demands further attention. At the same time, other prominent inequalities should not be ignored, such as unequal allocation of household responsibilities, career development and gender wage gaps on the part of women, and health hazards, lower life expectancy and inequalities in child care, custody and support on the part of men.

Ultimately, within a very short timeframe, the project achieved considerable results and changes, first and foremost in the three pilot districts, but also at the national level. As planned, it built capacities, broadened the range of governmental and non-governmental institutions addressing domestic violence, demonstrated the value of inter-sectoral cooperation, and established new databases for better information management and sharing. The project also reached out to the broader public, parents and youth with important information and messages. At a higher level, the project served to build trust between the government and NGO sectors, a particularly striking achievement given a generally challenging relationship between the two. It contributed to the GoB's applaudable decision to develop a comprehensive domestic violence law consistent with international standards. All the while, it can be safely assumed that close coordination with the complementary SIDA-funded project was an important ingredient of success.

Indications of sustainability are largely positive. Stakeholder ownership is high at the national level and in the three pilot districts. Assuming no political set-backs to the current government's ambitions to tackle domestic violence<sup>87</sup>, the national policy environment is conducive to building on and replicating achievements in other regions and districts. New knowledge obtained through trainings, study tours and other forms of exposure has been institutionalized in district-level cooperation protocols and the curricula of secondary schools and national training institutes. A shortage of state funding at national and local levels due to the country's economic slowdown<sup>88</sup> and competing demands could possibly turn out to be a critical threat to future benefits, although one not greatly thematised by stakeholders.

The future of the NGO network appears unsure. While current network members generally appreciate its coming into existence, only few seem willing or able to contribute actively and/or monetarily rather than merely consuming. Nevertheless, a nucleus of active NGOs surrounded by a number of others can be expected to thrive, in itself an important achievement.

Looking ahead, the start to elaborating a comprehensive domestic violence law is imminent. UNFPA is well positioned to support the process should the GoB request. To be able to do so throughout the coming months and years<sup>89</sup>, it urgently needs to mobilize funds - or ideally allocate regular resources.

While the project did not neglect violence prevention, its emphasis was on ensuring the availability and use of reliable and confidential services for women or children already facing critical situations in their homes. While this is clearly relevant, interviews with survivors demonstrated all too evidently how difficult it is to escape domestic violence, recover from injuries and trauma, and, thus, how important prevention and early intervention is. Dismantling gender stereotypes and inequalities is an important prevention strategy, starting with children and young people; prevention and reduction of alcohol abuse and dependence also.

Rolling out the domestic violence inter-sectoral cooperation mechanism to the remaining 115 districts of Belarus requires careful planning and monitoring. The suggestion to do so in a phased and supported manner stands to reason. In chapter 5, the evaluation team suggests how its effectiveness can be increased.

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<sup>87</sup> Presidential elections are planned for 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Brought about in part by a sharp decline of the currency.

<sup>89</sup> The adoption of the comprehensive domestic violence law by the national parliament is expected by 2016/2017.



## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on project achievements and in view of future activities in the area of domestic violence and gender equality in Belarus, the evaluation team submits the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Preparations for the new comprehensive domestic violence law are impending. UNFPA should urgently offer and make available support for elaborating the new law, including
  - promoting further exposure of concerned ministry officials to international good practice;
  - facilitating consultations with national NGOs; and
  - sensitizing members of parliament.
2. The GoB has started to roll out the domestic violence inter-sectoral referral mechanism at the district level. On request, UNFPA and UNICEF should provide support for replicating and further increasing its effectiveness - i.e., by way of
  - involving the judiciaries<sup>90</sup>;
  - exploring the pros and cons of and possibilities for integrating NGO service providers more closely - e.g., by dedicating funds under the Social Order;
  - ensuring that concerned social workers undergo trainings on effective case management;
  - further strengthening the implementation of protection measures such as the network of crisis rooms and restraining orders;
  - correcting legislative measures that deter victims from seeking help such as administrative fines;
  - creating the legislative basis for introducing a unified domestic violence information system and rolling out the inter-sectoral child protection database; and
  - including basic data security and right to privacy in trainings and re-trainings.
3. The time is ripe for Belarus to address gender equality in a more systematic manner. In the absence of UN Women, UNFPA should play a key role in forthcoming processes such as
  - Ensuring gender equality is adequately addressed and mainstreamed in the forthcoming UNDAF, UNDAF results matrix and UNDAF monitoring and evaluation plan;
  - Supporting the GoB in the submission of its state party report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2016;
  - Supporting an inter-ministerial approach to preparing, implementing and monitoring the new National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAPGE) 2016-2020 - e.g., by way of developing a context-sensitive gender equality “assessment toolkit”; and
  - Through existing networks, supporting non-governmental research and analytical work on gender equality issues as input into national and local-level consultation processes.

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<sup>90</sup> Investigators, prosecutors and judges.