



## GEMMA against Violence:

Gender based Empowerment of Migrants through a Multiagency Approach<sup>1</sup>

### TRANSCULTURAL GUIDELINES

FOR WORKING WITH MIGRANT WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE<sup>2</sup>



Azienda Ospedaliera  
Ospedale Niguarda Ca' Granda



<sup>1</sup> Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme- JUST/2014/RDAP/AG/VICT/7382

<sup>2</sup> DISCALIMER: GEMMA Against violence! has received the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) of the European Union. The contents of this document and project related publications are the sole responsibility of GRT & Partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission

## Introduction and Overview

These Indications are developed within European Project GEMMA<sup>3</sup> (Gender Based Empowerment of Migrant Women through a Multiagency Approach) to help service providers and community members in supporting migrant/ethnic minority women survived to violence.

They unfold in 2 components:

**Component 1: Networking and liaison of relevant agencies and development of a multi-sectoral response to support migrant/ethnic minority women and girls survived to violence.**

**Component 2: Raising awareness and promoting women rights in migrant/ethnic communities on issues of GBV and empowerment of women and girls within these.**

Some items are preceded by a “m” or a “C” according to their pertinence to the Multiagency component or to the Cultural Sensitiveness one.

### Glossary:

Violence against women is a broad umbrella term, defined by the United Nations as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”.

It includes many different forms of violence against women and girls, such as intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, trafficking, and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced early marriage, honour killings, etc.

### Culture warning:

While understanding cultural/ethnic diversity is crucial, “culture” and “ethnicity” must not be considered as a closed set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours shared by all people of a certain origin. Diverse cultures, like our own, are enriched by personal views and divergent interests and aspirations of their members. For this reason cultural competence is crucial in order to understand how each individual perceive and relate to cultural obligations of his “community” within a dynamic and evolving process.

Although violence occurs across all cultures and socio-economic groups, the experience of violence (including the perception and acceptance of what is violence) can vary markedly for different ethnic and cultural communities.

Considering violence within migrant/ethnic minority women as directly related to “culture” or “ethnicity” alone is a superficial shortcut explanation that can lead to stereotyping and failure in recognizing other important factors (i.e. social, economic, political).

---

<sup>3</sup> Info: [gemma.itinerante@gmail.com](mailto:gemma.itinerante@gmail.com)

While diverse cultural background may not be the cause of violence, it remains relevant to understand and respond to violence within migrant and ethnic minority communities.

**Recommended actions and decision:**

- Foster mutual cultural awareness and understanding, among those (professionals, community members and service users) whom represent the links between people and societies;
- Ensure that equal dignity of cultures, mutual respect, equality, freedom and solidarity represent the foundation principles of all interventions;
- Make education and trainings a vehicle for learning about diversity by promoting interdisciplinary exchanges of skills, knowledge and expertise;
- Involve men in taking responsibility toward violence and support them in playing a crucial role in raising awareness and promoting gender equality.

## COMPONENT 1

### Networking and liaison of relevant agencies and development of a multi-sectoral response to support migrant/ethnic minority women and girls survived to violence



#### STAFF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Training program aimed at enhancing awareness knowledge and skills of professionals (should consider):

- m** Interdisciplinary (ensure knowledge sharing between different professionals working across psychosocial, legal, medical and economic fields)
- C** Knowledge on main notion of GBV and harmful traditional practices particularly experienced by migrant and ethnic minority women (including forced marriage, dowry related abuse, FGM, trafficking)
- m** Knowledge on GBV extent and possible barriers in accessing help
- C** Knowledge on migrant and ethnic minority population, including main migration trends and flows
- C** Main notion on trauma associated with immigrant pre-arrival and early settlement experiences
- C** Notions on immigrant status vulnerabilities ( psychosocial, economic, legal and administrative )
- m** Knowledge and understanding of legal measures and procedures
- m** Knowledge of international/national standards<sup>3</sup> and their local application
- C** Knowledge in cultural competence: professionals must be sensitive of culture and ethnic, religious, racial and language diversity
- C** Awareness of providers' personal values and prejudices and competences to deal with people who hold different ones
- m** Knowledge on how to enhance trust-building and empathy

Training to support staff (i.e. guards, receptionists) that come into contact with survivors before the latter access a specific service , to be considered

Involvement of key community members/leaders in specific training modules [C]

Group cases supervision for professionals

Engage beneficiaries of training (institutions, third sector association, professionals) in assessing the training effectiveness and positive changes, in the long-term

Make sure acquired skills are acknowledged (i.e. through endorsement of local authorities)

<sup>3</sup> i.e. Istanbul Convention and Beijing Action Platform

## APPROACH:



### A. Multi-sectoral

Cooperation between the State, Local Government, Not for Profit, Volunteer associations, Informal active citizens networks

Agencies such as Police, Health care and Social services and Shelters need to be represented. (It can be important also to have: emergency social services, adult social work, child protection services, maternity clinics, basic health care services, MH and substance abuse services, employment specialists)

**m** Involve agencies working with hard-to-reach individuals

**m** Capacity to orientate/refer if the service is not directly provided (consider online services in remote areas)

Fostering an effective communication and mutual understanding between both policy makers and frontline practitioners

**m** Constant communication between professionals is needed in order to operate successfully

**m** Cultivate a common language and compliance to specific and mutually acceptable principles and joint tools (risk assessment; referral pathways, needs assessments, evaluation tools-both of services and of service received by survivor)

**WARNING:** Not all services may be relevant to all women's cases and some may even be harmful/increase risk **when not tailored on women's need or timing.** [m/c]



### B. Person centered

Having a single case-manager/professional team who undertakes a holistic assessment of individual's multiple needs and acts as a mediator between different services

[This can avoid survivor's exposure to multiple interviews on the same topics and possible re-emerging of suffering and frustration]

Setting up a central administrative 'hub' as a single point of contact for service users that manages referrals between different agencies

Taking in consideration the evolving needs of women during the process

Including community representatives in multi-agency task force

Ensure that trust and positive relationships are always in the centre: women/girls feel SAFE, respected and free to take their decisions ( promotion of female group only)



### C. Trans-cultural

Service providers are culturally sensitive to diverse communities and needs (i.e. cultural norms, beliefs, identity and social-economic implications of migration including legal migrant status) and understand that individual norms and aspirations may diverge from the ones shared by all community members

---

Have workers with relevant bicultural and bilingual skills

Maintain a right based approach that gives priority to safety, choices and empowerment of each survivor, taking into account her aspirations in relation to “community” ties (i.e. understating whether they are an obstacle or an added value)

Promote the use of interpreting/cultural mediation services across all sectors and services as well as the provision of written information<sup>4</sup> to be available in other languages in addition to the hosting country one

Always rely on trustworthy and qualified interpreters/cultural mediators while avoid to use family members or friends (including children) to fill the language gap

**WARNING:** children **must not be asked to act as** interpreters after witnessing family violence **as they can be further traumatized**

---



### SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY:

#### Services for GBV survivor are able to provide services/support to child:

Supportive housing for mother & child

Teaching activities for mothers on parenting skills and consequences of violence on the child, make the child “visible” to the parent

Give mother the possibility to attend services by keeping the child in a separate room (with dedicated activities, i.e. playing)

#### Multi-language information to be available

Language translation/ cultural mediation available and properly trained

Cultural mediator/translator can speak the right dialect

The gender of the cultural mediator is appropriate

Multi-cultural and/or multilingual professionals

Services’ accessibility must be promoted by social media

---



### PRIMARY PREVENTION – REACH OUT STRATEGIES:

Advertise the services through IEC materials translated in different languages, online platforms or other media (TV, radio...) , by spreading information through key professionals and community representatives

Social /cultural events can represent favourable venues to publicize the program and services

---

<sup>4</sup> Consider that some women may not be literate and may need to be given information verbally

---

available (in different languages)

Placing advertisements/information flyers both among women public frequently visited places (i.e. small shops selling ethnic food, social services, general doctors, children's schools) and private ones (i.e. gynaecologist, toilets, women dressing rooms)

Include Gender Based Violence issues into the general health programmes

Engage key community representatives: religious leaders, community leaders and embassies;

**WARNING:** Pay attention to the information conveyed through the IEC materials/online platforms (avoid explicit labeling, i.e. violence-related services, if this can cause stigmatization/ increase barriers to access).

---

---

## ETHIC AND SAFETY



Possibility of anonymous service access

Every intervention must respect the principle of confidentiality and “do not harm”;

Survivors are considered competent, given appropriate information and are informed participant during all the process;

Safe storage of information;

Timely response of services to women' help requests;

Shelters at a secret address /accessible 24/7, dedicated staff to work with children;

Acknowledge and respect women personal timings and right to make choices or to withdraw

Pay attention to where and how<sup>5</sup> the survivor is interviewed. Make certain that she/he is comfortable and able to tell his/her story without outside pressure (including from the interpreter/mediator or other professionals)

Ensure survivor is treated with respect and sensitiveness toward her cultural values, norms and beliefs

Having safety of women and children safeguarded, allow as much as possible the continuity of social relations and daily routines.

---

---

<sup>5</sup> The type of physical or personal contact considered appropriate may vary from person to person and across cultures and social groups, for example how close to stand to someone, how much eye contact to make or whether or not to touch someone, especially someone of the opposite sex. Unless you are familiar with the culture of your survivor, you should not approach too closely, make prolonged eye contact or touch. You should look for clues to a survivor's need for “personal space” and seek guidance about cultural norms from community leaders who best understand local custom.

## COMPONENT 2

### Raising awareness and promoting women rights in migrant/ ethnic communities on issues of GBV and empowerment of women and girls within these



#### EMPOWERMENT

##### Permanent general Education program to make people active, critical and responsive:

Teaching the hosting country language/ basic literacy skills

Educating on their rights and on available services / how to access/use them

Education on policies and changes in order to prevent problems for women caused from misinformation, within organizations and the society in general (ex. Istanbul Convention)

##### Specific educational program on GBV for women:

PHASE I: to increase women' ability of self-management, self-protection and prevention of GBV

PHASE II: to enable women trained on PHASE I to become facilitators of supporting groups women survived or at risk of DV

##### Specific educational program on GBV for men:

Provide men knowledge on gender in/equality and violence and their role in the issue

Encourage men in taking positive initiatives to promote gender equality as individuals, members of families, social groups and community members

Support men in dismantling structural inequalities and changing gender stereotypes

##### Promote self determination through financial independence, independent living and employment

Offer/Connect women to job skills training

Connect women to employment agencies

Link women with community and government assistance programs

##### Support women initiatives (by ensuring/providing needed resources and or facilitating linkages with municipalities and others services to obtain them)

Foster the implementation of cultural activities (celebrations, multicultural events and so on) encompassing the safeguarding and promoting of heritage in all its forms, encouraging creativity and facilitating mutual understanding

#### WARNINGS:

Deliver same training for migrant/ethnic community as well as for national member so as to avoid the risk of cultural stigmatization

Make sure not to judge or make assumptions from a ethnocentric perspective, on the contrary try to use a cultural relativist one

Consider peer programmes and information campaigns on gender sensitive education/training as



critical in achieving gender equality, including in work places and institutions.



## COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH

**Bottom-up: promote community<sup>6</sup> engagement and build relationships with community leaders/members<sup>7</sup> or trusted NGOs<sup>8</sup> when designing and delivery programmes for migrant/ethnic minority women (applying the principle “nothing about us, without us”<sup>8</sup> :**

Promote participatory research on target population by meeting communities representatives, Support/ involve local migrant/ethnic groups in developing practices to address the identified needs,

Train community representatives, youth and second generation migrants in planning and deliver activities (capacity building, support in developing project ideas and regular monthly trainings, ad hoc problem solving)

Promote the exchange of practices with other similar groups,

Empower local (migrant/ethnic minority) groups to take responsibility of their own communities,

Support/facilitate local/community leaders in taking key position in society/political participation where they can continue to work in behalf on their community

**Engage women through activities that they can be interested in (not only specifically on violence)**

**Working gently in growing awareness on violence (ex. accompany women through the violence identification process)**

**Combine general programmes/activities for the wide community with ones targeted at migrant/ethnic communities and at migrant/ethnic minority women groups only**

**Be aware of the potential harmful impact that the community may also play (isolation, shame and guilt).**

**Consider relevant the role of gender promoters in gbv programmes**

**WARNING: age, gender, personal-political history of the cultural mediator has be taken into account in order to promote a trustworthy relationship**

<sup>6</sup> Beware that well educated/integrated community members (such as third or second generation migrants) may not embody (represent) traditional cultural/ethnic elements.

<sup>7</sup> grassroots movements and organizations already working with women on the field.

<sup>8</sup> No policy or programme should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy/programme.



## AWARENESS RAISING

Advocate on issues related to ethnic/cultural discrimination and violence

Support women in campaigning for issues identified as priorities ( i.e. political activism on law's statements, services' barrier)

Involving facilitators, key community members and people sharing same language or mediators

Using multiple communication means such as theatre, amateur, actors, involving press and politicians

Get closed to communities (i.e. meet communities face-to-face in geographic areas where they are located)

Offer programmes to support discussion on differing expectation regarding gender roles

Discussions groups: try to motivate people and society to protect women, change attitudes

Include other factors more than gender only (i.e. health, financial and legal status, children life)

Engage and educate children through school activities on gender equality and diversity

## Acknowledgments:

This version of the Guidelines was developed by all organizations taking part to the European Project Gemma (Gender based Empowerment of Migrant Women through a Multiagency Approach) Against Violence: Begoña Pecharromán, Leire Kortajarena e Inès Dinant (FARAPI-Spain), Edna Giménez e Anaitze Aguirre (SOS Racismo-Spain), Zhitomir Dzhungurovand, Mariya Rachinska, Rossanka Venelinova, Zlatina Siderova (EICP Foundation-Bulgaria), Nora Lindstrom, Ralitsa Dimitrova, Milja Moilanen, Maria Dorofte (HDL-Finland), Georgios Chadoulis, Panagiotis Chondros, Dimitris Galanis (EPAPSY-Greece), Massimigliano Reggi, Gianluca Morlino (GRT-Italia), Viviana Seveso, Alice Baroni (Compagnia Itinerante-Italia), Maria Curia, Clara Ruffetta, Valentina Stirone, Anna Moia (Ospedale Niguarda-Italia), Giovanni Viganò, Marta Distaso (Synergia-Italia) Tim Greacen (Maison Blanche-France).

Significant contributions to the development of these guidelines were made during the Second Gemma's Transational Meeting hosted in Paris-by the Associated Partner Maison Blanche, where several international experts were invited to contribute.

We warmly thank all the experts who have given generously of their time and their experience: Milena Stateva (Tavistock University), Carmen Gheorghe (E-Romnja Association), Shulamit Ramon (University of Hertfordshire) Ander Bergara (Emakunde-The Basque Institute for Women), Sarah Martin (International Rescue Comitee) Simona Lanzoni (Pangea Onlus), Hélène Spitaels (Vie Féminine Association).

We also want to thank all professionals and community members, across all countries, who have taken part in the discussion and refining of the guidelines, during the roundtables and the focus groups organized within the Project.

A final special thank goes to all women, violence's bystander or survivors, whom through qualitative interviews, have given their precious contributions and knowledge on such sensitive and important topic.

## Resources:

- ② Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2005) Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies. Geneva. <http://www.unhcr.org/453492294.pdf>

- NPWWL Project (2007-2013) ESF Programme: The Tavistock Institute & West London Alliance. Good practices in social inclusion through employment: Learning from Roma integration. <http://www.tavistockinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Good-Practices-in-Social-Inclusion-through-Employment-Final-Research-Paper.pdf>
- ☐ Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016) Summary and recommendations. Victoria AU. <http://www.rcfv.com.au/Report-Recommendations>
- World Health Organization (2013) Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines. Geneva. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85240/1/9789241548595\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85240/1/9789241548595_eng.pdf)

## Good Practices and Projects:

- ☐ The Multiagency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) to protect the victims in situations of serious violence: [www.thl.fi/marak](http://www.thl.fi/marak)
- The fight against injustices linked to racism, sexism and capitalism. Vie Féminine: <http://www.viefeminine.be/spip.php?article3362> <http://www.femma.be/nl/over-femma>
- ☐ Las Dignas Woman Association towards Dignity and Life (2014) Specific protocol for public institutions offering assistance to women facing violence: SELF-HELP GROUPS as a kind of group care" in El Salvador <http://www.lasdignas.org.sv/>
- Multicultural Women's Association (1998) Monika Project aimed at immigrant women survived to GBV. Finland. [www.monikanaiset.fi](http://www.monikanaiset.fi)

## Contacts:

European Project GEMMA (Gender based Empowerment of Migrant women through a Multiagency Approach) Against Violence.

[gemma.itinerante@gmail.com](mailto:gemma.itinerante@gmail.com)