

WE GO!

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WE GO!3

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From individual IPV empowerment to community activation

White Paper France

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

AVCs: Anti-Violence Centres

CIDFF: Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et de la Famille (information centres on women's and family rights)

FACE: Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion

FNCIDFF: Fédération Nationale des Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles (National Federation of information centres on women's and family rights)

IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

MFS: Maison France Services

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organization

SIAO: Services Intégré de l'Accueil et de l'Orientation (Integrated Reception and Guidance Services)

WE GO: Women Economic Independence & Growth Opportunity

INTRODUCTION

WeGo3 as a path to promote socio-economic empowerment of IPV survivors

In 2014 the European Fundamental Rights Agency published the first EU-wide survey on violence against women based on interviews with 42.000 women about their experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV). The results were alarming: almost 1 in 4 women experienced violence in a relationship with a man. It was a wake-up call.

A year later, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme funded *WE GO! Women Economic Independence & Growth Opportunity*, a project that allowed actors from seven EU countries to exchange know-how and practices on how to support the social and economic empowerment of women who survived violence. The project thrived especially on the crucial knowledge and expertise of Anti-Violence Centres (AVCs), which eventually led to the development of ad hoc recommendations.

WE GO! 2 - Building Economic Independence, the Way Out of IPV was built on the foundations laid by WE GO! 1. Six organizations from Italy, Spain, Greece, and Bulgaria continued the work begun in 2015, namely 3 NGOs, 2 AVCs, and a research institute. WE GO! 2 aimed to broaden the use & deepen the impact of promising practices to foster the IPV survivors' economic empowerment, through a better coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector. The project's specific objectives were:

- » To design and deliver transferable training sessions to strengthen the capacity of professionals to support the economic empowerment of IPV survivors, also through the establishment of local networks (Capacity Building).
- » To test scalable models of territorial multi-agency coordination to boost IPV survivors' employability via a local ecosystem capable to provide for workable solutions for IPV survivors (Networking).
- » To update knowledge on the economic empowerment of IPV survivors and share it through trainings for companies, events, and debates, involving a wide range of actors (Awareness Raising).

The third edition of the project - WE GO3 – From individual IPV empowerment to community activation – started in April 2021 and was built on the main findings of the former WE GO! Projects. It targets 4 countries – Italy, France, Greece and Bulgaria - and is implemented by 6 partners, namely: ActionAid Italia, Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (FACE), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS), Center for Sustainable Communities Development, Rel.azioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, and Women's Center of Karditsa (WCK). WE GO3 aims to increase the local multi-agency networks' capacity to foster the IPV survivors' socio-economic independence through the design and adoption of gender-responsive labour policies. The project's specific objectives are:

- » To strengthen AVCs and support services' capacity to influence institutional processes on socio-economic empowerment-related issues.
- » To increase the active participation of companies and the world of work at large in a multi-stakeholder local ecosystem to promote the economic independence of IPV survivors, also through decent work opportunities and support. The consolidated networks of companies created in the previous projects will collaborate to extend the audience of organizations engaged in the IPV survivors'

support.

- » To improve the policies that support IPV survivors to overcome barriers to their economic empowerment.
- » To advocate for the integration of policies addressing IPV survivors' support, socio-economic empowerment, and discrimination both at national and EU level.

The white paper as part of WeGo3

The participatory planning process was implemented between the first and second semester of 2022 and was articulated in:

- » 3 trainings with AVC about Women's Labor Rights, Focus Group Methodology and Policy Lab Methodology
- » Collection of "IPV survivors' voices" data from two organisations with 1 focus group and 8 individual meetings;
- » 3 workshops with representatives of companies, trade unions, job placement and training centres, anti-violence centres, and national/regional/local institutions, aimed at highlighting needs and critical issues identified by women, on the current policies, norms and tools to foster the economic empowerment of IPV's;
- » 4 policy labs aimed at discussing the results and identifying solutions to improve current policies and tools.

AVCs, institutions, companies, trade unions, job placement and training centres have been involved in a participatory process in order to co-design and test supporting measures for IPV's in the field of work, including the adaptation of work-life balance measures to IPV's specific needs, the extension of anti-discrimination policies to GBV cases, the introduction of support measures for IPV's searching for a job or employed in precarious jobs.

The objectives

This white paper aims to improve the different stakeholders and political decision-makers understanding of domestic violence. Its objectives are:

- » To improve the support of women experiencing domestic violence through the implementation of the recommendations;
- » To increase awareness among institutions and political decision-makers on how to support the structures involved in the socio-professional (re)integration of women facing domestic violence;
- » To enable companies to better understand how to engage with the actors involved in the pathway back to employment for victims of domestic violence and how to support these women in their socio-professional (re)integration;
- » To highlight the importance of considering the different factors involved in the socio-professional reintegration of these women and the intersectional approach that policies must adopt, especially regarding issues related to rurality.
- » The objective of this white paper is to outline the key results from the local trial, to provide an

understanding of the obstacles present in the socio-professional reintegration process, and to improve victims' access to employment. This paper first addresses how socio-professional (re) integration structures need to be trained to meet the specific needs of IPV survivors. Understanding the mechanisms and the effects of intimate partner violence is essential to providing the appropriate support while accompanying survivors in their journey to re-employment. The paper then addresses how companies can invest in the reintegration process. Finally, this paper seeks to share the lessons learned during the local trial. The recommendations presented in this paper will hopefully inspire new projects and help stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of policies and access to employment.

Issue 1: Training socio-professional (re)integration structures to meet the specific needs of IPV survivors

a. The obstacles that victims of IPV face during their socio-professional reintegration in a rural environment

Domestic violence can negatively impact women who experience it. Not only can it affect their physical, mental, emotional well-being, but it can also have economic consequences. Due to its complex nature, socio-professional (re)integration may take months, or even years. It is of utmost importance to understand the different and sometimes conflicting factors that women confronted with domestic violence face in order to ensure their well-being and reintegration. These factors and challenges may vary depending on the victims age, education, race, social origin, sexual orientation, cultural and linguistic background, immigration status, marital status, economic situation, disability, and previous experiences in their lives. That is why the reintegration pathway is different for each person and requires a multitude of services, which first cover basic needs, such as:

- » Housing – living in a safe and stable environment;
- » Psychological and emotional support and counselling;
- » Administrative support – information about their rights and the services to which they are entitled;
- » Legal assistance, including representation in court for child custody;
- » Childcare and support for children;
- » Opportunities for personal, social and economic development.

It is important to address all these issues to prevent the victim from returning to an abusive home.

Other issues that may emerge in victims' lives and relationships during their reintegration which also require intervention (for example, a job loss, losing the home, etc.) and the women could be at risk to return to the abuser. In the initial crisis phase, victims often require intensive support and extensive services. Their needs may ease during the transition phase and over the course of reintegration and inclusion.

The mechanisms used by aggressors negatively impact the health and well-being of victims and their pathways to (re)employment. Regarding socio-professional integration, victims of domestic violence can face personal obstacles (self-esteem, confidence, emotional and material instability). They may also face professional obstacles within a labour market that is not, or is poorly, adapted to vulnerable people (the entrenchment of extremely stereotyped jobs, the inflexibility of employment, unsuitable employment opportunities and the employer's "profit motivation"). Structural obstacles place victims in a situation where they are unable to find employment. Additional barriers include lack of qualifications, gaps in their CVs (lack of experience), housing and childcare difficulties or a lack of a social network and isolation. In rural areas, geographic isolation can amplify all these obstacles. The impacts of domestic violence can also manifest during the job seeking process: inability to cope with administrative tasks, exhaustion, lateness, and absences from appointments with employment assistance and control bodies.

People looking for work naturally turn to socio professional (re)integration structures, and among

these job seekers there may be IPV survivors. It appears that these socio-professional (re)integration structures do not know how to identify, support or guide IPV survivors. This is because they do not understand domestic violence, and they lack the appropriate resources. As a result, their reintegration programme is not adapted to the specific needs of women experiencing intimate partner violence. The consequences on the victim can be difficult. For example, to receive social welfare benefits, jobseekers are subject to obligations. The job seeking process must be justified (copies of applications, replies from employers, etc.). It is frequent that victims of intimate partner violence see their payments blocked because of failure to attend appointments, to produce relevant documents, refusal of an offer without explanation, etc....

Rural areas characteristics

In France, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the country's living areas are rural, representing 78% of the country's surface area. Rural areas are inhabited by about 31% of the population.¹

While it is estimated that almost half of all feminicides take place in rural areas, the situation of women living there is often not well known. Women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, injustice and violence.

While inequalities between women and men affect all social groups, women in rural areas face additional difficulties.

Women in rural areas are more isolated, less supported and less protected because there is less anonymity in rural areas. This can make it difficult for women to disclose about domestic violence and can increase the control exerted by a perpetrator. Victims may be unaware of the support available or may be isolated from support systems.

In addition to a less developed and less accessible network of associations, particularly specialised ones, there is a lack of availability of public services as well as a lack of professionals, particularly health professionals, which hinders the identification and care of victims. Where they exist, these services are also insufficiently visible. Indeed, studies have shown that women in rural areas are less likely to access their rights, or justice centres that provide legal information. In Île-de-France, despite a large percentage on the population in rural areas only 9.7% of the points of access to rights, and only 2 of the 32 justice and law centres are in rural areas²⁻³

Moreover, the risk of being affected by unemployment and precarity is greater for women in rural areas. Indeed, obstacles to employment are aggravated in rural areas. There are fewer employment opportunities compared to cities. The opportunities that do exist may be very gendered and lower paid. For example, women who live on farms are susceptible to having precarious situation. Despite working full-time, their work may not always be declared by their husbands. In this situation, women can find themselves without their own resources and materially dependant on their partner. Additionally, mobility is also a great issue in rural areas due to a poor public transport provision. Often, having access to a vehicle is essential in finding a job. Not all women have a driving licence, access to their own car or are able to finance a vehicle. Finally, childcare is an obstacle to the socio-professional reintegration

¹ <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/5039991?sommaire=5040030#onglet-1>

² Centre Hubertine Auclert, Actes du colloque du 2 octobre 2018, p. 31

³ BERRAT, 2008, p. 6

process of survivors of IPV. In rural areas, there are less places available compared to cities.⁴

After leaving the family home, IPV survivors sometimes find themselves without economic resources or housing.

There are three types of complementary housing facilities offered by the public authorities to women victims of violence⁵:

- » **Emergency accommodation** for a few weeks to ensure safety and shelter
- » **Transitional accommodation** for several months to allow women to benefit from support, regain their autonomy and reintegrate into society
- » **Permanent social housing** for women in a situation of autonomy

It should be noted that since 2005 the law recommends that the violent partner be evicted, allowing the victim to remain in the family home. However, its application remains insufficient. If victims wish to benefit from this service, they must file a complaint against their abusers. Thus assuming, that she is informed of her rights. Police and justice professionals must be trained in these issues⁶ and propose it to victims as a potential solution. In rural areas, this can be especially important for victims. They can avoid the tedious process of changing accommodation or towns.

Moreover, there are very few permanent social-housing available for IPV survivors compared to the needs. The difficulties in accessing permanent and secure accommodation have direct consequences on job-seeking. For example, a woman who has to move house every week cannot look for work, or successfully maintain a job.

Women in rural areas experience a more complicated path. For them, getting out of domestic violence and leaving a violent spouse is a daily struggle specific to their environment⁷.

⁴ 39 childcare places per 100 children, compared to 50 nationally).

⁵ Rapport Femmes Ruralité : Centre Hubertine Auclerc p.80

⁶ Centre Hubertine Auclerc, 2016, p. 80

⁷ FNSF, 2016, pp.29-30

WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

Key figures : Employment of women in rural areas

- » The unemployment rate for women in rural areas is **11.8%**, compared to 9.9% for men (ANCT, 2020).
- » **21% of rural women are on so-called “precarious” contracts** (fixed-term contracts, temporary work, internships), compared to 16% of rural men and 13% of women living in urban areas (ANCT, 2020).
- » **30% of women living in rural areas are part-time**, compared to 24% in urban areas (ANCT, 2020).
- » **30% of farmers are women, and 1 in 4 farms is run by a woman** (DGER, 2020).
- » **36% of the job offer in rural municipalities concerns male-dominated sectors**, compared to 21% in urban municipalities (ANCT, 2020).

Key figures : Domestic violence in rural areas

- » **50% of feminicides are concentrated in rural areas, where 30% of the population live.**
- » However, **only 12% of women confronted with domestic violence go to the police**, compared to 36% in the city.

The issue origin and evolution

The Law n° 2014-873 of 2014⁸ states that all the professionals involved in the support of the women victims of violence should be trained on domestic violence, on violence against women and on the mechanisms of psychological control.

It is in this sense that the Pôle emploi⁹ and the Fédération Nationale des Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles¹⁰ (FNCIDFF) have signed a master agreement¹¹ to promote professional equality and gender diversity in the workplace. The aim of this agreement is to strengthen and develop their partnership by offering personalised solutions adapted to the needs of the most vulnerable jobseekers, particularly women. This will make it easier for them to return to work by offering personalised solutions adapted to their specific needs.

This master agreement is structured around four areas of cooperation:

- » Developing knowledge of reciprocal service offers: the counsellors of the Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et de la Famille (information centres on women's and family rights) (CIDFF) will be able to sensitize Pôle emploi's agents in the field of combating violence against women, in order to better guide female job seekers who encounter these difficulties.
- » Contribute to a shared diagnosis of the situation of women in the territories, by identifying together the specificities of women seeking employment.
- » To seek complementarity of service offers in the professional integration pathway of vulnerable persons: in conjunction with the Pôle emploi, the CIDFFs could intervene by offering information

⁸ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000029330832/>

⁹ About Pôle emploi : Pôle emploi is the public operator of reference for the employment market. As part of its public service mission, the establishment is committed to guaranteeing support for job seekers in their search for work and to meeting the recruitment needs of companies. Pôle emploi relies on nearly 900 local agencies and relays. The pole-emploi.fr website receives 42 million visits per month.

¹⁰ About the FNCIDFF : The National Federation of Information Centres on Women's and Family Rights is a national association on which the State relies to implement the policy of informing women about their rights and to contribute to the promotion of equality between women and men. The FNCIDFF is responsible for the strategic management of the network of Information Centres on Women's and Family Rights (CIDFF) throughout France, which includes 103 local associations and 13 regional federations of CIDFFs, and supports the development of the CIDFFs in their activities as well as the regional federations of CIDFFs in their structuring.

¹¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wXSA6IA_fwCKDye2OtiVtSkALGO1JfsC/view

sessions on access to rights, parenthood or the returning to a professional activity.

- » Strengthen professional equality by helping to promote gender equality in the workplace: Pôle emploi advisors will thus be able to work with CIDFF advisors on actions to promote gender equality in the workplace in their territory.

b. The importance of raising awareness

How the solution has been identified?

In order to respond to these problems, we organised four policy labs from March to December 2022. We brought together different people and organisations to exchange and to draw upon their experiences and expertise on the socio-professional reintegration of women victims of domestic violence. The idea behind these meetings was to co-construct a local trial aimed to help IPV survivors who are in a process of socio-professional reintegration.

We wanted this local experimentation to be co-constructed by a plurality of actors who act on a daily basis on these subjects such as : companies, the Observatory of intra-family violence of Allier, the Services Intégrés de l'Accueil et de l'Orientation (Integrated Reception and Guidance Services) (SIAO)¹², the Chantier d'insertion (Integration Workshop), the associations that receive women, in particular the CIDFF, the Departmental Council, town halls, communities of communes, Pole Emploi, Cap Emploi, Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (Family Allowance Fund) (CAF), local missions and the Club FACE Territoire Bourbonnais.

The various actors who met during the policy labs were first invited to discuss three areas of reflection:

- » Identifying and combating the peripheral obstacles to the socio-professional integration of women victims of domestic violence
- » Supporting women victims of domestic violence in defining a coherent professional project
- » Strengthening synergies between the actors involved in professional reintegration

This work also highlighted the importance of networking to enhance effectiveness on the ground. It is necessary to bring together the partners involved in the socio-professional integration of women facing domestic violence in order to develop real long-term cooperation.

Furthermore, the dissemination of information is a central issue. It is important for women to be aware of the different possibilities. Women must not be forced into seeking help, but they must be made aware that specialist support services exist and that they are available when they feel ready.

As a result of these main findings, we have drawn up **three proposals**:

Proposal 1: Working on the company's immersion

The first proposal was to work on immersion in the company. The aim was to ensure that the company had a benevolent attitude and was prepared for the arrival of an employee who had experienced

¹² Created in 2010 to facilitate access to accommodation and housing, the SIAO are responsible for organising and managing the demand for and supply of accommodation and housing through a partnership network of social surveillance, accommodation adapted housing and housing. In concrete terms, they have a role to direct people who call 115 to the available accommodation or suitable housing, coordinating partners, particularly coordination of partners, in particular social surveillance partners (outreach services, day centres, etc.) and social observation.

domestic violence.

The aim was to prepare the employee's entry or return to the labour market as well as possible by presenting her working conditions in a very precise manner (visit to the company, preparation for the first day, detailed description of the job, etc.).

During the policy labs it was suggested that this proposal be adapted to the modalities of the trial through the creation of a good practice guide for companies for the return to employment of women facing domestic violence (which could also correspond to other vulnerable groups).

Proposal 2: Developing an informal exchange place for better access to information

The aim of this proposal was to provide a place open to all to access information on domestic violence including socio-professional (re)integration.

This place could take the form of a crèche, a bus or even an office in the premises of an association.

In order to adapt this proposal to the local trial, it would be interesting to start from an existing facility (Maison France Services, Planning and Family Education Centre, association) and train a person in issues of domestic violence and employment.

Proposal 3: Raising awareness of domestic violence in companies

The aim of this proposal was to raise awareness in companies about domestic violence and socio-professional (re)integration.

Awareness-raising could be based on existing tools (posters, guide, e-learning), presented at information meetings attended by staff representatives. In order to adapt this proposal to the local trial, it could be done through the organisation of awareness-raising sessions on domestic violence for companies both on the issue of the maintenance of jobs, and socio-professional reintegration.

The three proposals were relevant and complementary. Depending on which proposal was chosen, the actors mobilised would not be the same.

Solutions 2 and 3 appear to be the most relevant to the project objectives. Nevertheless, we felt that the proposal 2 "Develop a place of informal exchange for better access to information" would be more appropriate because our aim was to provide a place open to all for access to information on domestic violence including socio-professional (re)integration. Moreover, it is the "first step" to start supporting IPV survivors. In fact, when starting a socio-professional reintegration programme, the job-seeking or rights access structures are the places where the women victims will be in contact with the first people who will be able to adapt the socio-professional reintegration programme and thus adapt it to their specific needs.

c. The local trial

Proposal 2 is the solution we have established which is materialized by the chosen local trial.

Wanting to work on the subject of conjugal violence and in the particular context of rural areas, we decided to conduct the local trial in the department of Allier. In rural areas, women have more difficulty accessing information and often, the women concerned by this violence are not aware of the resources available to them. In these places “where everyone knows everyone else,” the fear of the reaction of relatives, neighbours or acquaintances sometimes also dissuades the victim from speaking out.

The Policy Lab showed a willingness to raise awareness among people working in social and professional (re)integration centres, who are likely to encounter women victims of domestic violence. This local experiment was therefore implemented with the aim of raising awareness of these workers with the help of specialized and local associations, so that these services could provide support in this type of violence by directing victims to the appropriate structures. Finally, the training of these services also aims to allow them to define a specialised accompaniment and to adapt the path of socio-professional reintegration to the different situations.

What did we provide?

The policy labs naturally led us to the conclusion that we needed to find informal places for our local trial. So, we decided to start from an existing facility and sensitize the people who work there in issues of domestic violence and reintegration. The idea is that structure working on access to rights or access to employment should be trained to welcome IPV survivors and guide them considering their specific needs.

Each Maisons France Services (MFS) on the department were invited to participate in a training course on domestic violence and the importance of professional reintegration. They have been trained to welcome properly IPV survivors and to guide them to AVCs or other specialised structures. Thanks to these awareness raising sessions the staff would be able to better guide them in their socio-professional (re)integration.

We distributed to them, many resources such as: flyers from the women’s rights information centres with all the numbers useful in the department, stickers, posters, the CEASE Booklet, the violentometer for potential victims and the violentometer for potential aggressors¹³.

¹³ The violentometer for the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence. It is a tool is simple and useful to “measure” if your romantic relationship is based on consent and does not involve violence. Presented in the form of a ruler, the violence meter reminds of what is or is not violence through a coloured gradation: 3 segments to assess whether one’s romantic relationship is healthy: “Enjoy”, “Be careful, say stop!” and “Protect yourself, ask for help” from green to red.

DEFINITION OF THE MAISON FRANCE SERVICES (MFS)

Created in 2019, the France Services network aims to facilitate access to public services for all. It allows users to carry out various administrative procedures in a single place.

The establishment of the France Services network reflects the French government's desire to bring public services closer to users. Led by the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities via the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, the network of structures labelled "France services" is made up of 2,379 local single inquiry points grouping together several administrations on their sites.

France services agents assist people with daily administrative procedures health, family, retirement, law, housing, tax, job search, digital support).

The aim is to offer a wider range of services to the public as close as possible to the regions, particularly in rural areas.

Why we chose to operate in MFS?

The MFS are informal places open to everyone, so women who use their services are not identified as victims of domestic violence. There is no stigma. Indeed, IPV survivors are sometimes reluctant to go to AVC since they will be "stigmatised" as victims of domestic violence. Whereas going to these structures can be done without the fear of the other's gaze because these centres are not categorised as specialised facilities for IPV survivors. Women can talk about the violence they suffer without the whole village knowing about it.

Moreover, socio-professional reintegration structures such as MFS are often unaware that they are in contact with women experiencing domestic violence. These structures can likely be in direct contact with victims. They do not always know how to react when they suspect a woman is in a violent relationship or when there is a disclosure of violence. This is due to the fact that socio-professional reintegration structures lack of information and they are not aware on the issue of domestic violence. Consequently, they cannot personalise their socio-professional accompaniment. In addition, while employment may alleviate barriers in housing and administrative procedures, socio-professional reintegration structures still need to provide comprehensive support to address all woman's needs. They often lack the necessary funding to deliver a long-term specific support program tailored to each woman's individual needs.

The policy lab shows there was a great interest in being able to talk about domestic violence in a place that is not basically specialised on the matter.

Moreover, the choice to focus our local trial on the MFS is strategic as far as they provide good territorial coverage.

We hope that this experimentation can be deployed throughout the national territory through various similar structures. According to us, every structure should also be able to redirect the IPV survivors to the appropriate structures.

Within the Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion there are 42 clubs which covers the entire national territory. All these clubs will be able to act as support points in the future to continue this dynamic launched with this local trial and disseminate it. They will have the capacity to form partnerships with the MFSs and APV structures present on their territory.

TO GO FURTHER

We thought it would be interesting to start from the Public Service for Integration and Employment (SPIE) for example. The SPIE is a group that brings together the partners concerned in each territory (general councils, Pôle emploi, the State, family allowance funds, Cap emploi, local missions, local authorities, training, housing, health, mobility, associations, companies). Since the SPIE involves several actors and coordinates different structures that may be confronted with women victims of domestic violence, it could still be envisaged to create a specific reporting system for women confronted with domestic violence in the context of professional integration while respecting the confidentiality of exchanges and anonymity. The WeGo3! project has shown that such programs need to be implemented to support those confronted with domestic violence during their journey towards socio-professional reintegration.

How was the local trial conducted?

This local experiment was defined during several meetings, bringing together local structures in the Allier. From these various discussions, it emerged that women facing domestic violence are sometimes led to go to structures providing access to rights and to confide in them about the situation they are experiencing or have experienced.

The aim of this local trial is:

- » to raise the awareness of the MFS and digital advisors about domestic violence, guidance and the reception of victims' words
- » to make companies aware of the need to participate in improving the conditions for women facing domestic violence to enter or return to work

Receiving a victim of domestic violence requires listening, understanding and a lack of judgement, particularly when the psychological mechanism of control prevents the victim from freely leaving the perpetrator. The training of professionals is therefore essential in order to understand the mechanisms of domestic violence and to improve the identification and referral of victims of domestic violence.

Who has been?

This local trial is deployed by the Club FACE Territoire Bourbonnais in the Allier, a rural French department located in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, in the center of France. This local trial takes the form of awareness raising sessions of the MFS, the digital advisers¹⁴ and companies.

These awareness-raising sessions were organised by the FACE Territoire Bourbonnais club with the support of the Allier CIDFF, a key actor in the issue of domestic violence. The duration of an awareness-raising session was supposed to last 2h at beginning but most of them lasted 3h30.

¹⁴ Digital advisers are part of France Services activity, they provide tailor-made support for administrative procedures and workshops on the use of digital tools. They depend on an association, a town hall or a municipality.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CIDFF OF ALLIER

In this context of territorial inequality, the Information Centres for Women's and Families' Rights (CIDFF) are particularly important structures to facilitate access to women's rights. Established at departmental level, the CIDFFs are organised around a national federation (FNCIDFF) which has signed an agreement on objectives and resources with the State. The CIDFFs develop several information, awareness-raising and support missions on the fight against violence against women or professional equality. Most of the people received by the CIDFFs are women (70% in the Essonne CIDFF), even though the CIDFF is a service accessible to all users. They bring together a multidisciplinary team made up of lawyers, employment advisors, marital and family advisors, etc.

The organisation of these awareness-raising sessions is part of an overall objective to strengthen the synergies between the actors involved in the socio-professional reintegration of IPV survivors in the Allier region.

The specific objectives are:

- » To raise awareness of domestic violence among MFS staff likely to be in contact with women who have experienced it
- » To train MFS staff to listen to these women
- » To train MFS staff to refer these women to specialised support structures
- » To encourage MFS staff to display resources posters in their premises with useful numbers for victims of domestic violence

Brief description of the trial

The added value of this experiment also lies in the fact that it is an "outreach" system. For example, these awareness-raising sessions permit the development of new places to meet and support women towards professional training or knowledge of their rights. The deployment of "outreach" facilities, such as our local trial, are essential in order to maximise the number of people who are aware of and likely to be in contact with IPV survivors. Indeed, we have been able to raise awareness among digital counsellors who work in itinerant structures.

EXAMPLE OF OTHER INTER-ASSOCIATIVE ITINERANT STRUCTURES

The national deployment of the inter-association itinerant bus system "En voiture Nina et Simone" tested in the Hauts de France. The aim of this itinerant service is to offer, as close as possible to IPV survivors' home, a first attentive listening by professionals before being directed to local associations according to their fields of competence. A professional who work in the association is trained on gender equality and violence matters and know who to listen victims. This is necessary to provide the permanences in collaboration with nearby structures (associations, public services, municipalities, social centres, etc.).

The action takes the form of a one-day itinerant reception point. It is a place for information, listening and guidance, free of charge and without an appointment, for anyone who has questions about equality between women and men, life as a couple, sexuality, gender, rights, integration and violence. The yellow van travels to neighbourhoods, rural areas and events (such as village festivals) at the request of partners including social centres.

Brief description of trial results

In total, we raised awareness in:

- » 6/10 MFS
- » 13/20 digital advisers
- » 6 companies and more to come in 2023

At first, we planned to organize a single awareness-raising session that would bring together all MFS employees. But there were complications because a mandatory meeting of the Regional Health Agency was scheduled at the same time as our awareness session. After that, we encountered difficulties in finding a date to meet everyone at the same time. Therefore, we decided to organize awareness-raising sessions in each MFS, and for each session there were two or three people present, which is the usual number of people per MFS.

It should be noted that the area is very rural, and the people are far from everything. The sensitized people were very happy to be able to benefit from these sessions. When a case of domestic violence is mentioned to them, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find emergency accommodation. People are often helpless and do not know what to do or who to contact in these situations. They often call the French national emergency number (3919)¹⁵ but they often don't respond to these situations. So, they choose to call social workers but there are very few of them and they are often far away.

Experience feedback

During the awareness-raising session, the participants enjoyed learning about the link between employment rights and IPV. For example, the case of a victim of IPV was mobilised to show the complexities of the situation. The woman worked as a housekeeper. Her employer sent her to a house in an area which was not covered by the restraining order the victim had against her ex-partner. In this case, the victim was advised to inform her employer. The employer has an obligation towards the safety of employees. By law, the employer must protect the victim from the risk of her ex-husband.

This local trial sheds light on the lack of resources and knowledge on domestic violence not only for MFS employees, digital advisors and companies but also for IPV survivors themselves. A study from the National Federation of Women's Solidarity¹⁶ underlined that victims of violence in rural areas are unaware of the mechanisms that protect them. The national helpline 3919 is very little used by victims in rural areas. Most of the time, women discover the existence of associations when the cops intervene and guide them there. There is a real lack of awareness of resource centres.

At the beginning the choice of proposal 2 for our local trial was focus on MFS but it evolved, and we extend the audience of our awareness-raising to digital advisers and companies. This expansion took

¹⁵ 3919 Violence Femmes Info is the national reference number for women victims of violence (domestic, sexual, psychological, forced marriages, sexual mutilation, harassment, etc.). It offers attentive listening, provides information and directs callers to support and care services. This number guarantees the anonymity of callers but is not an emergency number like the 17 number, used in case of immediate danger for example, which can be used to call the police or the gendarmerie.

¹⁶ FNSF Study, Françoise Brié, Director General of the FNSF." p.75

place naturally because companies were part of the policy lab and FACE Territoire Bourbonnais works closely with them. Finally, we went beyond the basic plan because it became clear to us that when working on reintegration issues we must work closely with companies. This type of programme could be interesting to set up throughout the national territory. Nevertheless, the involvement of companies seems to be necessary for its good deployment.

Issue 2: Involving companies in the socio-professional reintegration of IPV survivors

a. Intimate Partner Violence and Employment

Whilst this project originally sought to support and guide the victims of domestic violence towards stable employment, it quickly became apparent that there needed to be more cohesion between all the actors involved in the socio-professional reintegration of IPV survivors. Notably, the actors involved in the local trial highlighted that businesses need to be more implicated in the process. Employment structures and support organisations are crucial stakeholders in the socio-professional reintegration process. Companies are the last vital link to providing stable employment opportunities to survivors of IPV. For this reason, it became apparent for the local partners that companies needed to understand IPV, its effects on the victim, and on employment.

The Club FACE Territoire Bourbonnais organised a half-day training session on domestic violence for local companies. This session aimed to highlight the role of businesses in the fight against IPV. At the end of the session, participants were able to understand the mechanisms of domestic violence, identify the warning signs, and know how to respond to a disclosure of IPV. Finally, the sessions enabled the participants to reflect on how their companies can be more involved. Although the session was a great success, all the actors involved in the social and professional reintegration of women victims of domestic violence note the reluctance of companies to invest in this subject.

Securing a stable job can be a vector of financial emancipation and independence for survivors of intimate partner violence. The capacity to financially support oneself improves the likelihood of a woman being able to break the cycle of violence¹⁷. However, securing and maintaining a job can be difficult. Intimate partner violence has consequences on victims – On physical health, psychological health, in the social sphere, financial and material consequences, administrative consequences, on working life and housing - all of which can impact a woman's ability to successfully remain in employment. If survivors of IPV are to successfully enter the labour market, companies must understand the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

The local trial showed that many companies do not clearly understand the relationship between intimate partner violence and employment. For many, domestic violence is a private issue, that does not require their attention. Furthermore, negative stereotypes about victims of IPV may negatively influence a company's willingness to invest in socio-professional reintegration programmes for survivors. For example, believing that IPV survivors are unreliable can prevent employers wanting to engage in the socio-professional reintegration process. Whilst such stereotypes are untrue, some women may require additional support in their journey towards reemployment because of the structural- lack of qualifications, periods of unemployment, housing and childcare issues- and personal -lack of self-esteem, loss of confidence- obstacles they face. In rural areas, women experiencing domestic violence may face additional structural barriers: fewer employment opportunities, increased unemployment rates, a labor market that is poorly adapted to their needs, etc¹⁸. Employers who do not understand

¹⁷ The **cycle of abuse** was developed in 1979 by Lenore E. Walker it describes the cycling patterns of calm, violence, and reconciliation within an abusive relationship.

¹⁸ Insee

the short- and long-term effects of domestic violence may not be willing to undertake such changes.

Too often, Intimate Partner Violence is considered a private matter. Yet, it is a social problem: one woman in three in Europe are physically or sexually abused during their life, most often by a partner or ex-partner¹⁹. It is also an employer's problem - 62% of victims of intimate partner violence are employed²⁰. Every employer, therefore, has been, is, or will be in contact with an employee who has experienced intimate partner violence.

A study published in 2019²¹ which surveyed 40,000 employees in six different countries (France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK), investigated the consequences of domestic violence in the workplace. The study found that:

- » 16% of the women and 4% of the men interviewed reported current or past experiences of domestic violence;
- » 24% of the victims took time off work because of the violence they experienced;
- » 55% of employees surveyed reported that the violence had affected their work, particularly in terms of lateness, absenteeism and reduced productivity.

The effects of IPV in the workplace are evident. An average person spends one third of their time at work. For those experiencing domestic violence, the workplace is potentially the only place where they spend time away from their abuser. Companies therefore have an important role to play in ensuring that employee victims of intimate partner receive the support they need. In addition to holding a vital place in the socio-professional reintegration process of survivors, companies need to ensure that current employees experiencing abuse remain in employment. When a company is engaged in the fight against domestic violence, it can create a safe working environment. Survivors are more likely to successfully maintain employment when they feel protected, supported and listened to.

b. The importance of working together

The local trial highlighted the need for companies to be more involved in the socio-professional reintegration process. For their involvement to be pertinent, it is important that companies firstly become aware of IPV, that they understand the role in they play in the fight against it and finally, the appropriate actions they can be involved in. To do so, we believe that partnerships must be established between companies and specialist organisations- including AVC's. This solution seems especially pertinent in rural areas, where the resources may be more limited.

The key issue here is to improve coordination and collaboration between specialist organisations – such as AVC's who work directly with victims of IPV- and companies in the socio-professional integration process. The better the cohesion between the stakeholders, the more likely it is that victims will be successful in achieving socio-professional reintegration. Indeed, when organisations work together to share information and exchange best practices, they help to remove obstacles and barriers that

¹⁹ OMS : Devastatingly pervasive : 1 in 3 women globally experience violence. (2021, 9 mars). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>

²⁰ OneInThreeWomen. (2019, novembre). Survey held in 6 companies : « How does domestic violence impact the workplace ? https://www.fondationface.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/FACE_-_ProjetOneInThreeWomen.210x297_UK.pdf

²¹ *ibid.*

prevent women from accessing support and employment.

To achieve economic independence, victims of IPV must find stable employment. Women who may have been unemployed for a long time, have gaps in their CV, or need extra qualifications may need additional support in finding employment. Companies should offer training and opportunities to women who have experienced IPV. AVC centres who work with women in the socio-professional integration process can work help orientate women towards these training programmes.

To achieve full reinsertion, victims need to have financial stability. Feedback from a partner in a policy lab highlighted that some companies are enthusiastic to provide training opportunities for victims of IPV, but they rarely offer long-term stable contracts at the end of the training period. Whilst these training opportunities offer important work experience, they do not provide long-term stability to victims. Long term, permanent contracts equip survivors with the necessary resources to find suitable accommodation, to be financially independent, etc. It is important that companies be aware of this issue and work in collaboration with specialist organisations and other companies to try to find appropriate solutions to this problem.

During the local trial, the Club FACE Territoire Bourbonnais developed a mentoring programme for victims of IPV. They matched 20 women who had experienced IPV with a mentor from local businesses. Alongside the time spent with their mentors, the woman received 100 hours of training and personal development workshops. These workshops helped the victims of IPV to develop skills – such as I.T.- and discover other careers opportunities. The objective of the mentoring programme was to develop a tailor-made support programme for the reemployment process.

GOOD PRACTICE

The telecommunications company Orange has developed 'Digital Houses' in 23 countries. The Digital Houses train women – including victims of IPV- in long-term digital training to learn the basics or in certain software programmes, web uses, or to set up an entrepreneurial project.

Specialist organisations should train companies in understanding and recognizing intimate partner violence. By delivering training to businesses, AVC's help to reduce the stigma that is associated with victims of IPV. These training sessions can also enable AVCs to show explain to business the work that they undertake with victims, to reduce stereotypes surrounding IPV, victims and perpetrators. Indeed, by understanding the short- and long-term effects of domestic violence, companies will be more likely to implement measures that facilitate the socio-professional reintegration process.

In addition, training companies to recognise the warning signs and effects of IPV can also increase the likelihood of victims of IPV being able to maintain their employment. Companies should put special measures into place that help employers support their employees, communicate information about the local AVC to employees, train key people (Managers, HR, occupational therapists, etc) in recognising and responding to employees experiencing IPV, and allow victims extra paid leave to attend medical and legal appointments.

Companies should also clarify their role to their employees. Campaigns can be disseminated inside the company to communicate information on internal support (counselling services, helpline) and external structures. When the workplace is seen as a safe place where victims can find safety and support,

referrals and disclosures tend to increase. Thus, improving the impact of the measures put in place.

GOOD PRACTICE

The OneInThreeWomen Network supports companies to implement policies and procedures that ensure an effective response for employees experiencing domestic violence. They also allow companies to share best practices, develop their network of stakeholders and deploy a common voice.

Companies must be aware of the role they play in the fight against intimate partner violence. To do so, businesses who are already invested in the subject, should be proactive in mobilising other businesses to join them. For example, corporate campaigns can highlight the economic aspects of violence against women and its impact on the operation of a company.

GOOD PRACTICE

As part of its partnership with communications group Publicis, the OneInThreeWomen network created a [campaign on LinkedIn](#) to mobilize companies for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2022. This campaign highlighted a series of warning signs that could indicate that a colleague is experiencing domestic violence. It also served to remind companies of their role on the subject.

A success of the local trial was the creation of a toolkit for companies by the Club FACE Territoire Bourbonnais and Medef Allier. This toolkit aims to improve the participation of companies in the socio-professional (re)integration process. Equally, it aims to improve awareness of the importance of job retention for employees experiencing domestic violence. Indeed, the toolkit provides companies with the necessary information to raise awareness for their employees (posters to be displayed in offices, guidebook for employees, contact details for the AVC's). The toolkit enables companies to regroup all the information necessary and improve partnerships between agencies.

This local trial should be maintained and developed in other rural areas. Local networks of businesses and AVC's should be created across the country to improve the process of socio-professional reintegration. Local organisations and businesses are more able to adapt to the specific needs of a population. This is especially true for rural organisations who understand the additional barriers that rural populations are faced with. The process of developing partnerships, of mobilising companies and of training staff on the specifics of IPV can be lengthy. Yet, as the local trial showed, companies are willing to invest in the subject when they understand how they can be involved. Which is why the local trial should be continued and duplicated in other areas.

CONCLUSION

This project aimed to increase local multi-agency networks capacity to foster IPV survivors' socio-economic independence. To do so, this project sought to involve all the local actors involved in the socio-professional reintegration process. The policy labs provided an essential opportunity for stakeholders to voice the biggest obstacles that IPV victims' encounter. As a result of these discussions, the local trial was designed and piloted. Choosing a rural area allowed us to experiment with possible solutions to overcome the obstacles that victims in rural areas face. The success of this project lies in the fact that it is a proximity scheme.

Indeed, we chose to work with the MFS because they are present throughout France, and are integrated into the local areas. This choice also allowed us to carry out a local trial that can be deployed throughout the country, and thus demonstrate the sustainability of the project.

Moreover, the digital advisers are constantly moving around the region. Thus, increasing the chances of reaching the woman who are the most geographically distant and isolated. Thus, for those who cannot travel to services, as is often the case in rural areas, we have worked with existing facilities to enable women to access them. The deployment of outreach structures and services, such as our local experiment, should be encouraged as they are essential in equipping workers who will be in contact with victims of IPV with the necessary skills to act appropriately.

The awareness-raising sessions that we carried out within the MFS made it possible to develop new places where women could meet and be accompanied toward professional reintegration or to access information about their rights. When structures in contact with the public are aware of domestic abuse, they are more likely to identify cases and to refer victims to specialist services. This type of programme should be developed throughout the country in structures like the MFS.

The local trial also showed the importance of developing synergies between the different actors involved in the socio-professional reintegration process. Each structure has a specific role to play in this process and improving collaboration between them directly benefits IPV survivors. Indeed, when the specific needs of victims are identified and responded to with consideration for the situation of victims, the socio-professional integration is more likely to be successful. In this regard, the local trial showed that companies have an essential role in the socio-professional (re)integration process- as the last link in the chain, they must invest in the subject. Companies must understand the mechanisms and effects of domestic violence, for when they do so, they are more willing to accommodate the needs of victims. In addition, when businesses are aware of the problem, they not only help women who are looking for employment, but they also help their employees who are experiencing domestic violence to stay in stable employment.

Finally, the local trial ascertained the importance of working in collaboration. Each stakeholder involved in the socio-professional reintegration process of victims of IPV has a specific role to play. When these actors collaborate, the women they help are more likely to succeed.

The success of the local trial is encouraging and should be developed and extended into other rural areas. To ensure the successful deployment of this dynamic, the results of the local trial and the recommendations outlined in this White Paper should serve as a useful example to all the actors involved in the socio-professional (re)integration process.

Partnership

ActionAid Italia, Italia

Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS), Italia

Rel.Azioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, Italia

Center for Sustainable Communities Development, Bulgaria

Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (FACE), Francia

Women's Center Of Karditsa (WCK), Grecia

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