South-South Cooperation for Gender Equality

Coordinated Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence

Romania and Eastern Europe and Central Asian Countries

Romania’s East European Institute for Reproductive Health, featured here in its role as a centre of excellence, partnered with professionals from 10 other countries in the region in training, pushing for legislative reforms, enforcing laws, and promoting collaboration.

Issue

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a complex phenomenon, shaped by forces that operate and require multiple interventions at various levels - individual, community, institutional, legal and policy. There is no single intervention that will address all the risk factors for GBV and reduce the violence in the short run.

Countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region recognised that a coordinated multi-institutional response, including the judiciary, police, health and legal aid, among others, was vital to provide a comprehensive response to GBV survivors. The results of a survey conducted in 17 EECA countries to assess and better understand existing approaches, institutional frameworks and practices related to GBV revealed multiple stereotypes and a lack of awareness on its devastating effects, absence of a clear referral system, lack of legislation and political commitment, limited resources and a lack of a coordinated multi-sectoral response. Most countries highlighted the need for support to more effectively implement quality services and responses to GBV that meet international standards.

Towards a Solution

The EECA countries recognised that initiatives to improve the service response to GBV would entail training professionals; legislative reform or formulation of a new specialised legislation; enforcing policies or laws; and building partnerships and establishing collaboration among key stakeholders.

UNFPA in partnership with the East European Institute for Reproductive Health (EEIRH) in Romania engaged 11 countries in the region (Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Tajikistan, and Ukraine) in various initiatives aimed at addressing GBV through a multi-sectoral approach. These include rolling out the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (ESGs) and the GBV Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

In line with the South-South cooperation modality, UNFPA and EEIRH have been providing technical assistance on the multi-sectoral response to GBV, promoting policy dialogue, supporting capacity building at the national and local levels and promoting knowledge sharing between countries and key sectors. They have also facilitated the establishment of national Multi-Sectoral Response Adaptation Working Group (AWG) led by relevant institutions, as well as learning visits to Romania of multi-sectoral teams. In all their activities, UNFPA and EEIRH have promoted dialogue, partnerships and inter-country cooperation.
Results

As a result of the exchange of experience and study tours between different countries in the region with participation from ministers, parliamentarians and technicians, among others, the gender machinery in each country took ownership of the multi-sectoral response to GBV model and institutionalised it into their systems. Countries reviewed their policies, laws, protocols and regulatory frameworks to ensure that they are aligned and consistent with the provisions of ESGs and SOPs.

In Armenia, the law on prevention of domestic violence and protection of persons subjected to such violence was reviewed and recommendations based on the global guidelines were incorporated. Likewise, in the Republic of Moldova, the 2017-2022 national strategy on prevention and ending domestic violence against women were thoroughly reviewed.

In Albania, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, guidelines were developed for key sectors on how to respond to GBV, including specific services for survivors. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Turkmenistan, the SOPs focused on the health sector. In Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs adopted guidelines towards effective, timely and appropriate services to GBV survivors. The adoption was followed by the approval of an updated sectoral-based reporting format on protection orders.

A number of countries have organised GBV advocacy activities with policy makers and other key stakeholders to sensitise them about the importance of coordinated multi-sectoral responses. As of December 2017, over 300 national policy makers have participated in national or local-level consultations on the implementation of guidelines and tools for essential services.

As part of the knowledge sharing process, learning visits were held in Romania with
participants from Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Tajikistan. Ukraine organised four study tours to Romania for 71 multi-sectoral team members. As a result, local governments from two regions decided to set-up shelter for GBV survivors.

Lessons Learned

A cross-country exchange is a highly effective modality that brings EECA countries that traditionally are not used to collaboration by sharing their experiences and expertise, and by learning from each other on ways to more effectively address and end GBV.

Partners

The gender machinery of every government was involved in the project and took up active ownership. The involved institutions included:

- Albania: UNDP and Swiss project funds
- Armenia: Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Romania: East European Institute of Reproductive Health
- Belarus: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, UNICEF
- Kazakhstan: Local government of South Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Kyrgyzstan: Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Moldova: Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
- Turkey: UNHCR

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