

Municipal Policies on Violence against Women

Local policies on violence against women are one of the most effective means to serve local needs, facilitate access to services, improve quality and equity in service delivery, and increase the participation of different actors in combating this scourge.

Most Latin American and Caribbean countries have implemented laws and national programs to combat violence against women, which have led to the establishment of legal, health, and education services aimed at achieving this task. These services have generally benefited the large cities. Some legislation includes specific measures, in several cases based on public budgets and/or decentralization efforts, to plan and adopt policies against domestic violence at the subregional and municipal levels.

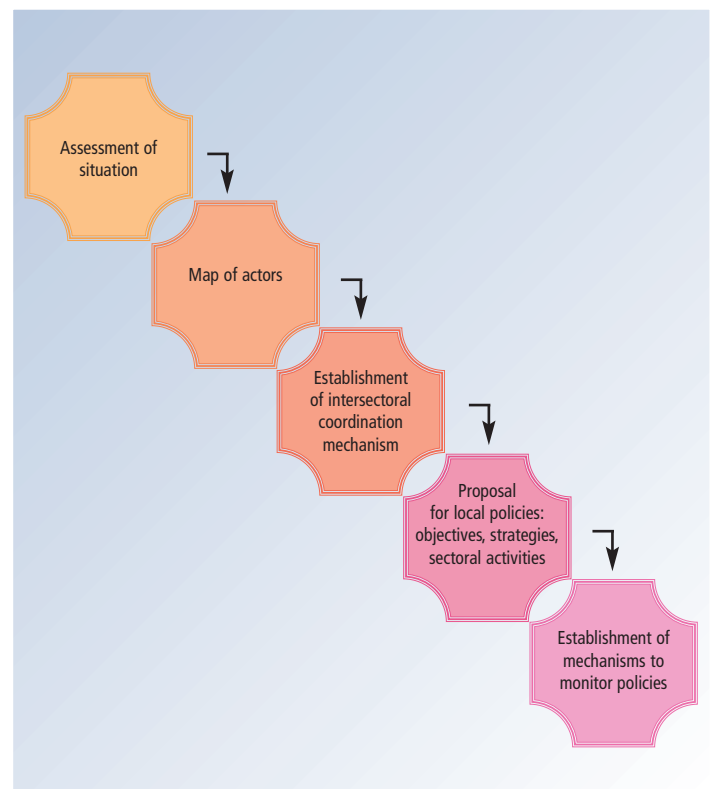
Local policies on violence against women benefit national policies by:

- (1) strengthening subnational resources and initiatives,
- (2) improving access to and quality of services,
- (3) assisting in the development of technical skills, and
- (4) increasing participation.¹

KEY STEPS IN DRAFTING LOCAL POLICIES ON GENDER VIOLENCE

The Dominican Republic offers an example of local policies on violence against women. The country drafted local policies (“Municipal Policies for Prevention of and Comprehensive Care in Domestic Violence against Women in Los Alcarrizos”) within the framework of the “Model for Laws and Policies on Domestic Violence against Women.” An operational organization was established to draft and execute

plans based on local and national information for program development, recognition of the perspectives of stakeholders, and establishment of mechanisms to evaluate the progress of interventions.² The steps taken are analyzed in the sections to follow.



Assessment of Situation

Assessment of the situation provides an evaluation of the dimensions of violence against women, the relevant local infrastructure, and institutional responses and then identifies what is needed for the municipality to combat the problem. Data were collected from universities and civic organizations, documents, official sources, and focus groups composed of key actors.

Key Information Necessary to Set Priorities for Local Policies against Gender Violence

- Sociodemographic characteristics of the locality
- Magnitude of the problem and types of violence prevalent in the locality
- Existing services for prevention of violence against women
- Institutional barriers to access: types and availability of services, costs, geographical aspects, sociocultural factors
- Profile of demand for services (percentage of victims who go to health centers or police departments and demographic characteristics of victims)
- Staff trained in various service areas (for example, health, justice, education, community groups)

Map of Actors

Mapping allows a full understanding of the characteristics of the actors involved in developing local policies on gender violence and their roles, positions, and level of participation. Among the relevant actors are the following:

- government agencies;
- civil society: women's organizations, youth groups, community groups, other nongovernmental organizations, trade associations, professional associations, and health committees or councils;
- churches;
- the private sector;
- news media; and
- international aid organizations.

Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms

The data collected through situational assessments and mapping are used to forge ties with institutions, organizations, and individuals interested in participating in drafting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating municipal policies. Intersectoral coordination is significant in that it can:³

- increase awareness of the programs and practices of the organizations involved
- promote sharing of good practices
- facilitate joint development of professional skills
- link the individual work of each organization in an integrated way and generate new strategies and services to serve collective needs

- improve channels for mutual reference among the different services
- generate conditions and terms for sectoral reporting and reporting on current programs

Advocacy aimed at drawing key actors into the process of implementing municipal policies on gender violence should be based on information regarding dimensions of the problem and social, domestic, and personal implications; the advantages of joint intervention in addressing the multiple dimensions of violence against women; and the added value of municipal policies on gender violence.

The many intersectoral coordination mechanisms that can be used to develop policies on gender violence include work commissions, committees, intersectoral boards, and social networks. These entities can assume a wide variety of structures, functions, and participant profiles. Most focus on policy design and provision of comprehensive services.

Benefits of Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms

Intersectoral coordination mechanisms allow a model of action to address a problem that has a significant impact on the population, service providers, and institutions. Such mechanisms facilitate synergy among government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and community organizations. They take advantage of the skills of each of the organizations involved and promote formulation and execution of joint initiatives.

MUNICIPAL POLICIES: ESTABLISHING OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Once the key issues associated with the causes and consequences of violence against women and possible solutions have been identified and policy objectives have been established, these ends find expression locally in policies, decision making, and the ways in which the problem will be addressed comprehensively.

Goals of the Dominican Republic's "Municipal Policies for Prevention of and Comprehensive Care in Domestic Violence Against Women in Los Alcarrizos"

- Promote a culture of equity between the sexes and the right of women to live free from violence
- Develop a comprehensive and multisectoral system for prevention, sanction, and care in all of the different forms of violence against women
- Mobilize all actors in the community to coordinate actions and invest economic, human, and financial resources for prevention, punishment, and comprehensive care of family violence against women

SECTORAL STRATEGIES

As a result of the multidimensional character of violence against women, it is necessary to define interventions with specific skills for each local sector, although some activities such as case-finding are engaged in by all participating actors. The table below describes the distribution of sectoral actions agreed on in municipal policies on care and prevention of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic.

Sector	Strategies
Health	Detection, medical care, prevention of violence, promotion of gender equity, psychological support, training, programs of care for personnel working with victims, records system, standards and protocols, intersectoral and interdisciplinary coordination
Administration of justice and public security	Filing of complaints, data collection, verification of complaints and protective measures, assessment of existing risk and need for protection, information for victims about rights and restraining orders, transfer of victims and their children, adequate treatment for victims, seizure of all types of weapons, detention of perpetrators, coordination with other sectors, staff training, investigations for clarification of facts, preservation of evidence
Education	Identification of gender violence cases, training of teachers and non-teaching personnel, guidance on legal instruments that protect women and children, evaluation of risks and damages
Community groups	Campaigns or prevention activities, formation of support groups and self-help groups, home visits, psychological care, participation in planning municipal policies, social mobilization measures when needed to obtain budgetary resources, formation of social networks on prevention and care

MEASURES TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF MUNICIPAL POLICIES

Implementing municipal policies on violence against women requires integrated actions that include the following, among other decisions and measures:

- **Intersectoral political will:** The highest authorities of government, civil society, and other relevant institutions publicly ratify their commitment to policies on violence against women.
- **Joint planning and implementation:** Participating sectors establish annual plans setting priority actions and coordinating their implementation to reinforce the work of each organization.
- **Dissemination of policies:** Policies are disseminated in all activities at the community level. All municipal organizations and the women affected by violence should appropriate the policies and actively integrate in the process of implementation, evaluation, and monitoring.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Progress of the proposed activities is monitored and evaluated periodically, including evaluation of the perspectives of participating women and users of the services.
- **Resources:** Human resources from each organization are assigned jointly to develop the annual plan, and a person responsible is designated within each organization. Each organization agrees to allocate part of its budget to implement these policies. The national government supports the action at the subnational level through budget allotments. Participating organizations also mobilize resources from international cooperation and the private sector.
- **Participation of women:** Successful implementation of municipal policies depends on interinstitutional agreements and the active participation of women in all processes involved in policy execution. Special attention should be paid to participation of women's groups and victims of domestic violence.

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- ³ Taylor-Browne, Julie. ed. 2001. *What works in reducing domestic violence?* London: Whiting and Birch Ltd.