

Addressing violence against women in Russia and Belarus

- Marina Pisklakova-
Parker

Center ANNA,
Moscow Russia

- Irina Alkhovka

Gender
perspectives, Minsk
Belarus

Center ANNA :
25 years of networking
ANNA is widely recognized nationally
and internationally. The organization
has a good reputation both domestically
and abroad. Over 150 regional non-
governmental and governmental
agencies focused on the issues of
violence against women are active
members of
ANNA National Network against
Violence. Since 2000 ANNA has been a
Russia focal point for the European
Network - WAVE (Women against
Violence Europe).



Violence against women

According to a new survey of the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion:

Almost half of Russian women consider it possible to become a victim of domestic violence

Almost half (49%) of the respondents believe that most often women in Russia encounter indecent comments, remarks, rude jokes, and 47% speak of an offensive attitude.

Also, many respondents talk about frequent cases of infringement of women's rights (36%), cases of physical violence (32%), sexualized violence (25%), harassment (24%).

Half of the respondents believe that the danger of becoming a victim of violence for women is higher in poorly populated, quiet places. The threat of violence exists in the family (38%), on the Internet (21%), as well as at work (11%) and schooling (8%).

TODAY, IN RUSSIA WOMEN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO BEING A SUBJECT OF VIOLENCE DUE TO THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

RECENT DECRIMINALIZATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVES WOMEN WITHOUT PROTECTION AND SENDS A MESSAGE TO PERPETRATORS OF DV THAT IT IS ALLOWED;

USING SO CALLED TRADITIONAL VALUES AS AN EXCUSE FOR DV

TWO WORKING GROUPS ON DRAFTING A LAW ON PREVENTION OF DV;

NONGOVERNMENTAL (NGO) CRISIS CENTERS AND SHELTERS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN PROVIDING SERVICES, OFTEN IN LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS, THAT MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT A STATE-RUN FACILITY. SHELTERS.

Current situation

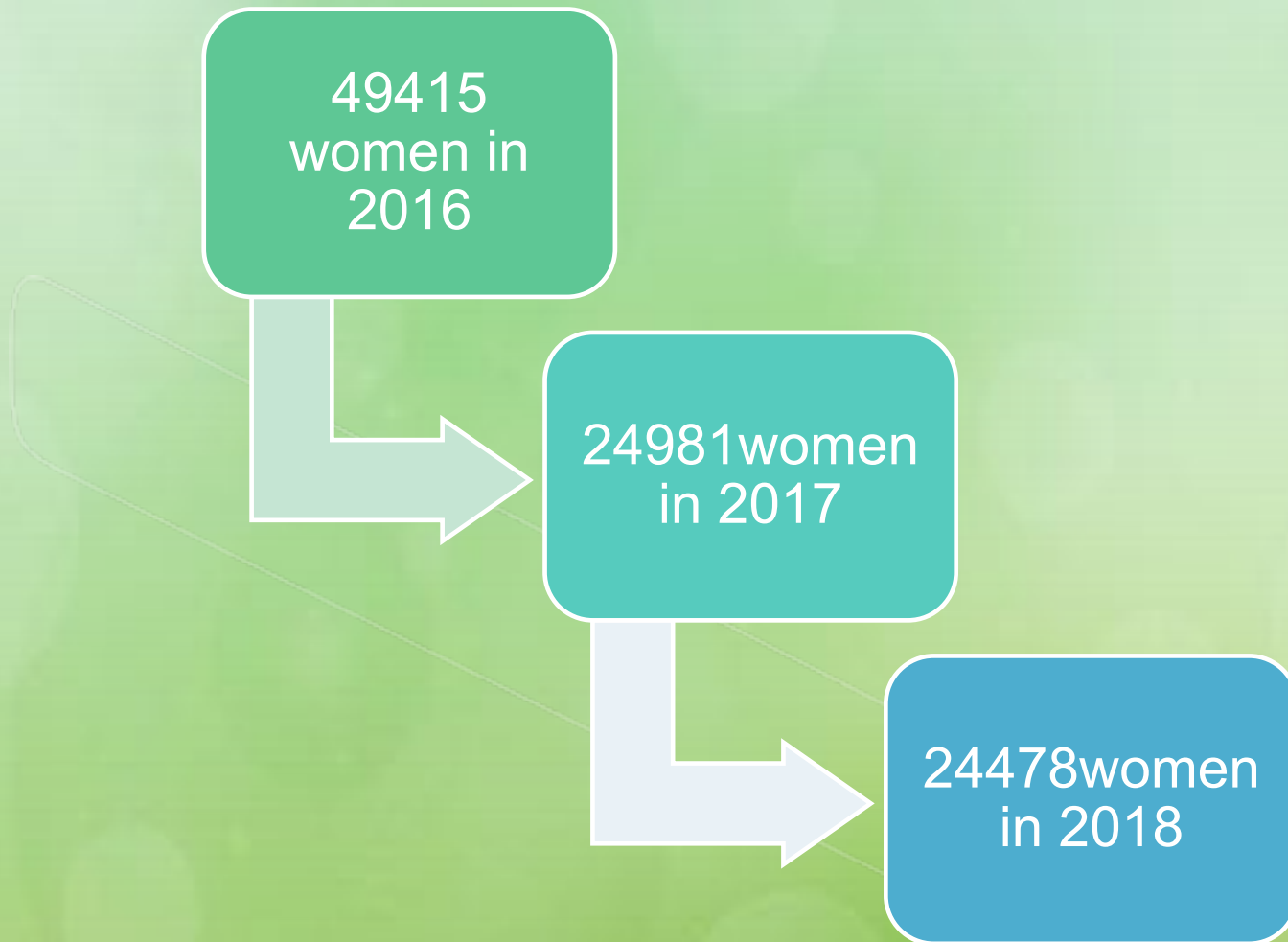
Decriminalization

A bill that partially decriminalizes domestic abuse passed all three readings in the Duma and became law when it was signed by the President and published on the government's official legislative website in February 2017.

The amendments of Article 116 of the Criminal Code decriminalized a first time offence of family violence that does not cause serious harm requiring hospital treatment. Only violence that leads to serious injuries like broken bones or a concussion would remain criminalized. The law would apply to violence against any family member, including women and children. Abusers, if found guilty, would face a minimal fine, up to 15 days' administrative arrest, or compulsory community service.

The decriminalization is very dangerous to the safety of thousands of Russian women suffering from the men's domestic violence. This decision sends a message that the state doesn't consider familial battery as a criminal offence and violation of women's human rights. The impact of decriminalization is to signal that domestic abuse is not a serious issue, and inevitably will give perpetrators a greater sense of impunity.

Official statistics: number of women victims of DV in Russia



Human Rights
Watch report:
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/25/i-could-kill-you-and-no-one-would-stop-me/weak-state-response-domestic-violence>

- While official statistics on domestic violence in Russia are fragmented, several indicators suggest it is pervasive. Official studies suggest that at least every fifth woman in Russia has experienced physical violence at the hands of their husband or partner at some point during their lives. A widely cited independent study revealed that women in Russia are three times more likely to be subjected to violence by a family member than a stranger. According to experts' estimates, between 60 and 70 percent of women who suffer family violence do not report it or seek help and only around 3 percent of domestic violence cases make it to court.

Development of law preventing domestic violence in Russia

- 1995– first draft presented by the women’s party “Women of Russia” through the committee on women, family and children of the Duma
- 2016 – draft of the law of prevention of domestic violence developed by the working group within the Ministry of Labour and social protection
- 2017 – decriminalization of domestic violence
- 2019 – two working groups on drafting legislation on prevention of domestic violence

National Helpline

- Free helpline for women suffering from violence
- 1992-2014 Moscow helpline
- National Helpline established with support from AVON in 2014



There is No excuse for domestic violence

- Center ANNA developed and distributed over five million of educational materials – posters, brochures, stickers and safety cards for women, and for the general public as a part of the national educational campaign “There is No excuse for domestic violence”





What results we were able to achieve in the past over 25 years?



Change in terminology

In the beginning of 90-s there was no term for domestic violence in Russian language.

First time we used the term in our educational campaign “There is No excuse for domestic violence”

Now it is a well-known term



Change in public opinion:

- **Was:** every second person considered domestic violence being a private matter and that a state should not intervene in it
- **Now:** according to ВЛЦИОМ (2017) :
 - 79% of respondents said that violence in a family is not acceptable.
 - 73% of respondents consider DV to be a very serious problem

Changes:

- **Was: 700 calls to the helpline in one year in 1993**
- **Now: 32000 calls to the National Helpline**



Changes:

- The number of state funded shelters increased three times between 2009 and 2017
- Addressing domestic violence became a part in the National Strategy of action in the interest of women (2017-2022)



▾ BELARUS

Data presented by
Irina Alkhovka

Gender perspectives

NGO

Women suffering from domestic violence in belarus (UNFPA, 2018)

49%

psychological
violence

28%

physical
violence

7%

sexual
violence
by partner

16%

economic
violence

Development of law preventing domestic violence in Belarus

- 2001 – first draft did not pass through the Parliament’s committees
- 2009 – definition of “domestic violence” introduced into law-enforcement legislation, but not in Criminal or Administrative Codes
- 2014 – provision on restriction order with possibility of eviction of a perpetrator up to 30 days (annually 7,000 orders issued)
- 2017-2018 – concept of a draft law elaborated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with UN and women’s CSOs, including Gender Perspectives
- October 5, 2018 President Lukashenko criticized the concept and the work has stopped

- 2017 – President instructed law-enforcement to elaborate measures to address domestic violence



- *October 5, 2018*
- A law against domestic violence is “a stupidity adopted from the West”
- “We” (Belarusians) should come from our own traditions and bring up children the way it should be even when it means using violence, because “a good strap sometimes is also useful for a child”
- Mr. Lukashenko by his own words often punished his elder son.
- Borrowing some family traditions from “them” (Westerners) sounds worthy of judgement, because “they won’t even have families soon: a man marries a man. There’s no one to bear children”

MAJOR GAPS AND CHALLENGES





National information campaign within UN trust fund and UNFPA funded project



Thank you!