



FINAL EXTERNAL PROJECT EVALUATION

“ENSURING GENDER AND AGE DIMENSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE REALIZED IN MOLDOVA”

period of implementation March 01, 2017 – February 29, 2020

Prepared by
Diana Cheianu-Andrei,
Centre of Investigations and Consultation “SocioPolis”

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Help Age International Moldova and UN Trust Fund

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This Evaluation Report has been developed by an independent evaluator. The analysis presented in this report reflects the views of the author and may not necessarily represent those of Help Age International, its partners or the UN Trust Fund.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA - Abuse Awareness Day

CEDAW - Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women

CAP – Centre for Assistance and Protection

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

EVAW/G – Ending violence against women and girls

FGD – Focus Group discussion

GBV – Gender-based violence

GPI – General Police Inspectorate

HelpAge - Help Age International Moldova

LPAs – Local Public Authorities

MDTs - Multidisciplinary teams

MHLSP – Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova

MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs

NASA – National Agency for Social Assistance

NGO – NonGovernmental Organization

NRS – National Referral System

OPG – Older People Group

RM – Republic of Moldova

SocioPolis – Centre of Investigations and Consultation „SocioPolis“

TOC – Theory of Change

TOR – Terms of Reference

TSSA – Territorial Structures of Social Assistance

UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNEG – United Nations Evaluation Group

UNTF – United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

VAN – Violence, abuse and neglect

VAW/G – Violence against women and girls

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within March, 2017 – February, 2020, the HelpAge International Moldova (HelpAge) has received funding from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF) to implement the „Ensuring gender and age dimension of human rights are realized in Moldova” project. The project goal was older women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) feel safe, secure and empowered, have increased knowledge and confidence to seek support services from duty bearers and service providers in 8 project communities in Moldova by February 2020. The theory of change (TOC) for the project was based on an organizational TOC on older people abuse, compromised of a holistic approach recognizing that ending violence requires interventions at different levels: government, local bodies, and communities.¹ Thus, the project includes different activities that complement one another, and altogether, provide a logical intervention strategy contributing to the achievement of the project goal, outcomes and outputs.

The Centre of Investigations and Consultation „SocioPolis” was selected to conduct final external project evaluation and to analyze the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by means of examination of the result chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria as effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact, as well as cross-cutting gender equality and human rights.

Effectiveness

Overall, the project effectiveness looks good.² The project reached the targeted primary and secondary beneficiaries. The beneficiary data shows that almost all indicators are higher than initially were planned. Respectively, regarding the primary beneficiaries: (i) 512 women and girls survivors of violence received individual and group counselling, participated in different outreach activities (planned – 180); (ii) 2510 older women and girls at risk of violence benefited from different outreach activities (planned 1644); (iii) 12 033 women and girls in 8 communities benefited from the awareness raising campaigns (planned - 24 400 women and girls). The last mentioned above indicator was not fully achieved, as during project implementation an urban community (Orhei) was replaced with a rural one (Raspopeni village, Soldanesti district). The number of the secondary beneficiaries also are higher: (i) 359 members of 32 district multidisciplinary teams (MDT), 8 local MDTs and 26 representatives of Centres for Assistance and Protection (CAP) received trainings on preventing, identifying and addressing violence against older women based

¹ The Local Public Authorities of the Republic of Moldova are divided into 2 levels: level I – rural/urban communities; level II – the district, which includes all rural and urban communities in a given territory.

² The assessment used a scale from 1 to 5 - where 1 means - very bad implementation, 2 - bad, 3 - neither good nor bad, 4 - good, 5 - very good.

on their needs (planned- 265); (ii) 155 staff of the local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the Older People Groups (OPGs) volunteers received trainings and benefited from mentoring activities on how to identify signs of violence and inform women survivors of violence and at risk of violence about their rights, existing services etc. (planned - 141); (iii) 26 journalists received trainings on how to present the cases involving the older people, including ageism in the media (planned – 25).

Project results in terms of knowledge, perception and attitude changes are impressive. The Endline study shows and evaluation proved the increase of older women that think that domestic violence is a crime, but is tolerated by the society, as well as the decrease in number of those who believe that violence cannot be avoided. However, we stress that project activities will continue to generate positive effects in future, both in terms of perceptions, attitude and behaviour of older women survivors of violence and at risk of violence, as well as creating an environment they could feel safe, secure and empowered. An important aspect of the project consists in multiple levels interventions according to the TOC: (i) local level – creation of the OPGs and capacity development of the OPGs, the local NGOs and the local MDTs; (ii) district level – capacity development of the district MDTs, (iii) national level – strengthening capacity of the National Referral System (NRS) to respond to age and GBV. However, the external evaluation data proves that the most important results have been achieved at the community level as violence against women in general, and violence against older women in particular, became a problem of the entire community and the local MDTs, the local NGOs, the OPGs and the Local Public Authorities (LPAs) are now involved in the identification, protection and referral to services.

Relevance

The feedback from persons that participated in the evaluation process reveals that the project was and remains *“highly relevant”, “extremely needed for older women at risk of violence and survivors”*. Data reveal that older women survivors of violence: (i) are reluctant to report cases, especially because the perpetrator is a family member and therefore specialists must know and understand the features; (ii) do not leave their house, are attached to it and the services are not adjusted to their needs; (iii) do not have transportation to access the few services offered to them (the project clearly established that they require mobile intervention teams).

The results achieved in the project show that older women are eager to communicate and want to *„feel useful”* in older age. This fact enabled the creation of the OPGs, and the engagement of older women volunteers in increasing awareness of women on violence prevention and assistance, identifying cases of violence among older women, developing successful practices. Thus, the methodology applied by HelpAge for this project was highly relevant and appropriate to the needs of older women and girls survivors of violence and

at risk of violence: (i) mentoring for the NGOs and the OPGs led to the necessary social, behavioural, and attitudinal changes needed to promote and protect the rights of older women and survivors of violence; (ii) self-help strategy empowered and mobilized older women in the communities to form and expand membership of volunteer groups but also establish relationship of trust and confidence between older women survivors and volunteers thus engaging into peer-to-peer support; (iii) capacity building for the local and district MDTs, CAPs improved identification, management and protection of age and GBV. The design of the project responds very well to the Republic of Moldova's (RM) context related to violence and to the need of older women survivors of violence of social support: (i) implementing Moldova's commitment to accede to the Istanbul Convention by signing it on February, 6 2017; (ii) the need to improve the mechanism of addressing cases of domestic violence, as well as the harmonization of national laws with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention; (iii) the development of the *National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and family violence for 2018-2023* and the *Action Plan for its implementation for 2018-2020* endorsed on April 3, 2018; (iv) the development of the Law on Volunteering endorsed on 18.06.2010 encouraging volunteering among the older persons.

Efficiency

The opinions of the local NGOs, the OPGs, the MDTs, the CAP professionals, the LPAs and the Government representatives indicate that the project team efficiently implemented activities. There was an effective project management, both at the strategic and operational level. According to the reports, all the expected activities were completed (certain activities were adjusted on the way, based on challenges that occurred, with the approval of the UNTF).

According to evaluation the most cost-efficient project activities were: (i) services provided in the community (especially psychological counselling, but also legal and notary consultations) for the women survivors of violence; (ii) the community outreach activities for older women survivors of violence and older women at risk of violence; (iii) the development of the local NGOs and the OPGs in the 5 mentees communities through mentoring.

The community outreach programme through sub-grants reached 2510 older women at risk of violence and 523 survivors of violence (512 women and 11 men). Beneficiaries assistance through individual and group counselling by the psychologist, lawyer, notary, but also different cultural activities at the community level consisted in 10.54 USD per beneficiary (total sub-grants amount for communities was 26 567.74 USD). This is an example of a highly efficient cost-benefit relation. For example: the psychologist's counselling encouraged the older women, survivors of violence: (i) to improve their self-

confidence; (ii) to take certain decisions (separation – one older woman from Donici, divorce – one older woman from Mitoc etc.); (iii) to speak up and engage in activities organized in the community. In some individual interviews, the women mentioned that psychological counselling helped them save their lives or stop thinking about suicide (one older woman from Mitoc and another older woman from Donici).

The cost-benefit analysis of the biannual trainings of the 155 members of the local NGOs and the OPGs by mentors cost 15 764.47USD (app. 101.71 USD per one member). However, the trainings strengthened their abilities to identify a victim of violence and empower women to seek assistance. The volunteers learned when is the most appropriate time for the victim to open for change (*"after participating in project activities, being informed about victims' rights, services and benefiting from 2-3 psychological counselling sessions"*) and when they are ready to take a decision to break the violence cycle (*"after talking to the psychologist, consulting the lawyer"*), learned how to identify signs of violence in older age (*"victims are afraid to leave their house, when they talk they avoid eye contact"*), how to do referral of cases of gender and age based violence (*"depending on older woman's needs, we refer her to the police, family doctor, social worker ..."*) and how to work together with the local MDTs more effectively (*"I usually notify the police officer or social worker when I suspect violence in the neighbourhood I am responsible for"*) and now feel more confident to identify and refer gender and age-based violence (*"I know how to talk to victims, I know I can help them..."*).

Sustainability

The core element of sustainability is the fact that older women survivors of violence and at risk of violence increased their knowledge about rights, different types of violence, specificities of violence, about available support structures and services, but also changed some of their perceptions and attitudes towards the phenomenon of violence (no longer tolerate violence, but seek help). Other elements of sustainability are the local NGOs and the OPG members, journalists, the MDT members, CAP professionals acquired knowledge and skills in preventing and combating age and GBV. The project helped to strengthen the NRS capacity in identification and management of age and GBV and revealed the need to strengthen sectorial and intresectorial efforts to provide assistance to older women survivors of GBV. Competences developed by duty bearers, service providers and civil society represent an important step in the protection and promotion of the rights of older people, specifically, the rights of older women survivors of violence and at risk of violence.

The HelpAge also managed to ensure the project sustainability by: (i) promoting the institutionalization of the OPGs through the *National Plan on Active Ageing by recruiting and training the volunteers*; (ii) preparing recommendations for integrating needs of older women in the *National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and*

violence in the family for 2018-2023 and its Implementation Plan for 2018-2020 through work of the Platform on Active Ageing on policy analysis.

An unintended aspect of sustainability was reached by the implementing partner, the NGO "Gender Centru". The NGO has sensitized government stakeholders by integrating some older women needs in the *CEDAW Concluding observations on the six periodic report of the RM* from February 20, 2020 - to adopt special measures to accelerate equal access to public positions, education and employment for women belonging to disadvantaged groups, including older women etc.

It is also important to point out that HelpAge is taking measures in prevention and protection of women and girls at risk of violence and remains one of the few CSOs that consistently and continuously monitor and develop practices related to rights of older people and older women survivors of violence.

The local NGOs and the OPGs continue supporting older women survivors of GBV even during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was confirmed through the evaluation process by the mayors from Mitoc, Peresecina, Donici villages. Still, the local NGOs and the OPGs need a small budget to be able to carry out more activities at the community level.

For scaling up such methods of involvement in preventing and fighting age and GBV in all communities of Moldova it is necessary to have follow up activities and share the experience in other communities, to publish a *Guidebook of best practices how to empower women survivors of violence and at risk of violence to seek support*.

Impact

Project's impact is multidimensional: (i) social impact on older women and victims of GBV, who became empowered because they now possess knowledge and became more active in requesting assistance; (ii) professional expertise of the MDTs, the CPAs, the journalists in the area of violence and abuse of older persons and support required is enhanced; (iii) volunteering experience of the local NGOs and the OPGs is developed that offered information to the community members on violence prevention that started to change attitudes towards older women and in particular of women survivors of the domestic violence in communities; (iv) policy impact through recommendations provided by HelpAge and the Platform on Active Ageing to integrate the needs of older women survivors into the *National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and violence in the family for 2018-2023 and its Implementation Plan for 2018-2020*.

The evaluation confirms that psychological well-being of older women survivors of violence has improved as they reported to be more confident in seeking support services and challenging their situation. Additionally we can state that in some instance the project went beyond anticipated results set by the project, as for example changing the image of

the older women and men in communities, changing LPAs vision about volunteering of older persons, the chorus created by the older women in Pelivan and the folk band in Mitoc. Activities carried out in the community enabled older women to: (i) better understand their own situation in order to overcome issues related to the old age – isolation, loneliness, panic, fear to speak up etc.; (ii) discover certain talents (writing poems, singing etc.).

The MDTs at district and local levels demonstrated a better understanding of the case management of older women survivors of violence, they have abilities to recognize older women survivors of violence and they knew how to offer support. Other impact on members of the district MDTs, the 8 local MDTs, the CPAs include: (i) raising awareness about age and GBV and initiating the process of changing their stereotypes; (ii) taking an individual approach to case management of older women violence survivors and planning activities according to their specific needs; (iii) improving collaboration between members of the MDT and sharing experience; (iv) building a trust-based relationship between the survivors of violence and members of the MDT.

The local NGOs and the OPG volunteers now have capacities to build enabling environment based on trust for older women survivors of violence or at risk of violence who in their turn speak more openly to the volunteers. These are signs of the maturity in their thinking, behaviour and experience related to age and GBV. The evaluation team acknowledged that the volunteers of the OPG became empowered and are seen in the communities as agents of change and support the older women at risk of violence and abuse to seek professional support.

The impact on the 8 communities is not less significant. The community members have changed their attitude towards the older persons in general and older women in particular. From the stereotype of „*the older persons are helpless*” they reached to a positive image as active volunteers, members of the OPG and „*agents of change*”. The older women volunteers in their capacity as agents of change empower other older women to not tolerate violence and inform other older women about: (i) human rights, (ii) violence and forms of violence, (iii) institutions they could address when their rights are violated, and last but not least (iv) they organize local activities to integrate the older women survivors of violence in the community.

Knowledge generation

The project developed some practices on ending violence against women and girls (EVAW/G) that have to be documented and shared with the practitioners and policy/decision-makers: (i) developing volunteering among the older persons by creating the OPGs; (ii) civil society (local NGOs and OPGs) mentoring to increase capacity of the OPGs to identify and refer cases of age and GBV to competent authorities as the MDTs for

example; (iii) the practice of positive champions of women which become “*agent of change*”; (iv) implementing community outreach activities (art therapy, sittings of older people, intergenerational communication activities etc.) that lead to the establishment of a trustful relationships between members of the OPG and older women survivors of violence or those at risk; (v) making use of arts for sensitization of the population on the issue of violence and abuse (theatre, social theatre) that helped to build confidence of older women survivors of violence in their own forces, and enabled them to speak up, etc.

Gender equality and human rights

The project implementation team was guided by the human rights principles: non-discrimination and equality, participation and inclusion, empowerment etc., using a variety of intervention strategies. „Do no harm” principle guided the activities implemented at the community level, as well as at the national level.

Through the age and gender dimensions, the project promoted the respect of human rights and gender equality. The women in the RM are disadvantaged in many areas compared to men and are more affected by domestic violence. The project contributes to the promoting the rights of a less disadvantaged group of people, that is often subject to multiple discrimination – women, older age, rural communities. The project enabled the participation and consultation of older women survivors of violence and older women at risk of violence and identification of their specific needs, providing solutions within its framework. So the project was gender-transformative³ by promoting the rights of older women and including different modalities to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations related to age and GBV.

Based on the evaluation results the following **recommendations are provided for to HelpAge:**

1. The project should be extended to other localities as it has demonstrated a replicable, scalable and sustainable model. However we propose some adjustments:
 - (i) capacity building of the local MDTs, as well as of the specialists dealing with the older persons within the Territorial Structures of Social Assistance (TSSA) as these specialists are directly involved in the actions of identification, assistance and referral of older women survivors, and only few cases of older women survivors of violence are referred to the district MDTs;
 - (ii) allocating more financial resources to services delivery provided to older women survivors of violence or at risk (services of individual or group

³ https://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/GMH_Participant_GenderAssessmentScale.pdf

counseling) that are currently lacking in the RM, but that demonstrated an enormous positive impact on older women survivors of violence;

(iii) including more intergenerational activities on preventing and combating age and GBV in the activity plan of the NGOs and the OPGs because such activities are more effective in changing the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of the younger generations, especially girls, towards violence⁴;

(iv) developing the OPGs capacities to participate in the local development planning to include the preventing and fighting violence activities, mainstreaming age and gender in the Local Development Strategies and Plans.

2. To prepare and submit a project proposal for the European Union funded project "Strengthening gender action in Cahul and Ungheni districts" to replicate best practices and models for promoting women empowerment, preventing and combating age and GBV.⁵
3. The new projects should be inclusive for older people with disabilities (women and men) and bedridden older persons. Statistical data from the RM ("Statistical Report on Family violence 2018") show that violence and abuse increases amongst this specific group of the older persons. In these circumstances, indicators related to disabled older women survivors of violence and disabled older men survivors should be included.
4. Develop dissemination strategy of the project results, best practices and lessons learned in order to disseminate the experience gained to the Government, the LPAs and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at national and local levels.
5. Develop the *Guidebook of best practices how to empower older women survivors of violence and at risk of violence to seek support*. The guide should offer methodological support, concrete tools on strengthening capacities of the OPGs, and also advocate for improving psychological, social and economic condition of the violence survivors (+60 years) on the local and national levels.
6. Develop certain Guidelines for specialists, community stakeholders on the integration of the age and gender dimensions in the Local Development Plans, engaging the OPGs in this process etc.

⁴ The intergenerational activities were organized during project implementation but usually ad-hoc, in future such activities should be better planned and involve also boys.

⁵ <https://sc.undp.md/tnddetails2/2067/>