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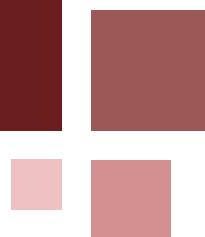
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Local Action to End Gender-based Violence in Moldova

SUMMARY BRIEF





Key Messages

- 1.** Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in the Republic of Moldova and has been severely underfunded at the local level. Urgent action is required through participatory local governance and inclusive partnerships that can more effectively respond to and eliminate GBV.
 - 2.** The pilot in Chirsova will demonstrate how to localize a national GBV plan and develop and implement coordination mechanisms and adapt innovative intervention models to achieve impacts on health, social welfare, justice, education, and economic development.
 - 3.** More efforts will be needed to ensure the sustainability of this stepped-up intersectoral local action, by bringing more stakeholders and payers to the table and demonstrating the societal and multi-sectoral value of investing in interventions to address GBV.
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Why is it important to address gender-based violence at the local level in Moldova?

Over 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older in the Republic of Moldova have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, according to an OSCE survey conducted in 2014¹. In the year preceding the survey, 9.4% of women had experienced intimate partner violence (IPV).

GBV is a widespread problem with significant health consequences, including physical injuries, mental health problems, lack of control over sexual and reproductive choices and increased vulnerability to HIV, as well as increased adoption of risky health behaviours, such as smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm and risky sexual behaviours. GBV also results in serious social consequences for the affected women and their children, who experience behavioural and emotional disturbances associated with poor educational outcomes and the perpetration or experience of violence later in life². Without targeted action, Moldova will not achieve SDG target 5.2 to 'eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres', and GBV will continue to undermine its health and wellbeing goal.

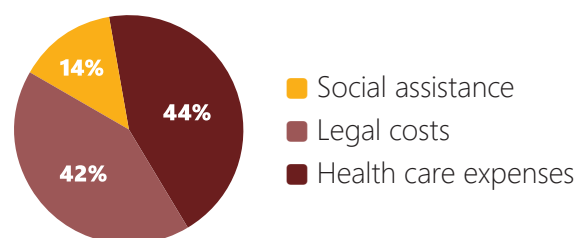
The unacceptable human suffering caused by GBV is further compounded by substantial direct and indirect economic costs for survivors, their families and communities, as well as the government and the economy. A 2014 study commissioned by UN Women³ estimated an annual cost to Moldova's government of 36 million lei (nearly 2.6 million USD)^b. Social assistance is a severely underfunded sector in Moldova, and over 60% of social service costs resulting from cases of violence were covered by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The study did not capture additional economic costs related to other sectors, such as decreased educational outcomes among survivors' children (education sector), or reduced productivity due to absenteeism (labour sector).



Government spent 36 million lei in response to GBV (2014)



A GBV survivor spends on average^c...



3,000 lei
on medical treatment



9,000 lei
on attorney services



3,200 lei
on temporary accommodation costs

4 x more

on attorney services than the government

1.5 x more

overall than the government

Despite a comprehensive legislative framework and National GBV Strategy (Box 1), there are significant gaps in funding their full implementation³. Survivors are not receiving the required social assistance, economic empowerment and social housing; mental health and psychosocial long-term support; and access to state-funded legal counseling and representation³. Over 30% of essential services by international standards are either inefficient or non-existent in Moldova, with over 175 shelter places still missing³.

^b Based on the 2014 annual rate of 14.04 Moldovan Lei per 1 USD reported by the National Bank of Moldova: http://www.bnm.md/en/content/official-exchange-rates#calculator_full

^c Estimates based on a survey of 20 survivors randomly selected from service beneficiaries from September 2015 to January 2016.

Republic of Moldova's Law and related National Strategies to address GBV

- Enacted in 2008, *Law No. 45-XVI on Preventing and Combating Family Violence*⁴ aims to protect and support the family unit by ensuring the human rights of women and men to a life without violence. It provides the institutional framework to address GBV through an Inter-ministerial Coordinating Council to ensure coordination and cooperation across ministries and other central administrative authorities. It establishes victim protection (a court can issue a protection order within 24 hours by applying a restraining order), encourages the establishment of centers/services for the rehabilitation of survivors and perpetrators, and allows third parties to file complaints on behalf of survivors.
- The *National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2018 – 2023* (National GBV Strategy)⁵ is aligned with the Istanbul Convention, and sets the standards for preventing GBV, protecting victims of violence, prosecuting perpetrators, and developing integrated policies through multi-agency cooperation and data collection.
- The *National Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men (2017-2021)* involves investments in social, psychological, legal, educational and economic services for women and girls.

Localizing the National GBV Strategy in Chirsova

Recognising the need for multi-sectoral action, Moldova has established an Inter-ministerial Coordinating Council for preventing and combating domestic violence at the national level to ensure coordination and cooperation across ministries and other central administrative authorities⁵. Although *Law no. 45-XVI* mandates the establishment of Multidisciplinary Teams as a matching structure to address GBV at the local level, the mechanisms created to date in Moldova vary in their efforts to address GBV issues. In regional ATU Gagauzia, pressing regional independence and administrative issues have been prioritised in the past decade and therefore, no matching local mechanism was established prior to 2018, resulting in very limited to no government investment in GBV prevention and response activities and very few survivors receiving support, particularly in rural communities³.

Communities provide a critical platform for effective local action in addressing GBV, supporting both national priorities and progress towards achieving the SDGs^{5,6}. Since GBV drivers and patterns are best understood at the local level, it is necessary to consider the local context (including cultural differences, gaps in prevention/service provision and training needs of service providers) and ensure active community engagement.

The global project *Ending GBV to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (2017-2020)*, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the Republic of South Korea, combines local participatory planning methods with the latest thinking in cost sharing in several locations across the world with high GBV prevalence. It supports the development of Local Action Plans



Photo: Ion Buga/UNDP

to address GBV, through both prevention activities and enhanced services for survivors, by bringing together a range of sectors and partners, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal on governance (SDG16).⁷

Expected outcomes include the reduction of GBV and improved support for survivors in selected locations by testing, costing and evaluating different types of intervention models and providing decision-makers, practitioners and community partners with policy recommendations and new knowledge, skills and tools to address GBV at the local level.

Chirsova village, in the autonomous region of Gagauzia, joined the global project in July 2018⁸. In this pilot project, regional and local authorities have embarked on a process to localise the National GBV Strategy with the support of UNDP by establishing local coordinating and financing mechanisms to develop, implement and sustain a participatory Local Action Plan.



Photo: Ion Buga/UNDP

Gender-based Violence in Chirsova village

A local situational analysis conducted in 2018 as part of the UNDP pilot found that:

- Intimate partner violence is estimated to be high (although underreported) with several severe injuries registered by the police.
- Domestic violence often happens as result of - and is perpetuated by - a combination of harmful norms, attitudes and behaviours; alcohol abuse; mental health problems and household poverty.
- There are serious gaps in GBV response services for survivors:
 - ✓ service providers require specialized training in addressing GBV cases in the community, including local referral mechanisms for the protection of survivors.
 - ✓ survivors do not have access to a safe confidential space, counselling or mental health support services
 - ✓ there is no alternative accommodation (shelter) available for survivors in the locality.
- Recommended areas for action included raising public awareness to prevent GBV; providing protection to survivors; training service providers in preventing and responding to GBV; and prosecuting GBV offenders.

Ingredients for success

The local government and community in Chirsova are combining several approaches and strategies to optimize the impact of the local action plan for the eradication of GBV.

Participatory and inclusive governance

The participatory planning approach has led to the institutionalization of a local multidisciplinary coordination and collaboration mechanism referred to as the Multi-disciplinary team (MDT). The MDT was formally appointed by the Mayor of Chirsova in October 2018 to fulfill the local obligations under Moldova's normative and legislative acts to address GBV prevention and response (including protection and prosecution needs) and enable shared responsibility and accountability, creating a more conducive environment to eradicate GBV.

The MDT, which includes Chirsova's Mayor and service providers as members, has been meeting quarterly to receive capacity building training to identify, manage and prevent GBV cases in the community, and develop an annual GBV Local Action Plan based on the recommendations from the situational analysis. While the law does not require civil society to be part of the MDT, the draft plan has been discussed with the community in several participatory discussions and public hearings. This participatory model has also enabled stakeholders in Chirsova to identify additional groups and organizations likely to benefit from the implementation of future plans, including different government levels (local, regional, national); sectors (health, social services, education, employment, justice), CSOs, and the private sector.⁶ It has also enabled an awareness-raising campaign targeting several demographic groups at the local and national levels, thereby highlighting that addressing GBV is everyone's responsibility and requires the transformation of harmful norms, beliefs and behaviours around GBV.

Based on the local drivers of GBV (limited employment opportunities leading to economic stress and alcohol abuse) and the unmet needs analysis identified by the situational analysis, the local government is supporting the establishment of a Safe Space, which is expected to provide GBV prevention and response services in Chirsova, including counselling services by adapting the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) to the Moldova context as well as economic empowerment activities.

Committed leadership that walks the talk

Local and regional authorities have, and are, investing in the implementation of a GBV Local Action Plan through:

- Substantial in-kind contribution of government staff time to develop and implement the first Local Action Plan
- Donation of the building for an innovative Safe Space (valued at 2,500,000 lei, or 141,000 USD)
- Contribution of 1,580,000 lei (84 000 USD) by Regional authorities toward the Safe Space renovations
- Commitment to cover the Safe Space running costs (estimated between 615,000-870,000 lei, equivalent to 35,000-50,000 USD per year, including the staff salaries for 2 social workers, a psychologist and a lawyer) from 2021 onwards, when it becomes a Public Institution^d.

Embedded monitoring, evaluation and learning

To ensure that the experience and learning from the Chirsova model can inform further efforts in the region of Gagauzia, in the rest of Moldova and globally, the project includes a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning component. The implementation research and analysis will guide the refinement of the activities in the Local Action Plan in real-time and identify the enablers to leverage these when replicating the model, as well as barriers to overcome them.

Costing and value for money

A costing exercise will inform the resources required to support implementation of the Local Action Plan, and budgeting requirements to replicate those efforts in other communities at a larger scale. These costs and the observed benefits of the Local Action Plan will be analysed to assess the value for money of the investment across multiple sectors and stakeholders. Building on this evidence, local stakeholders could advocate for co-financing of the planned GBV activities across a range of sources (both public and private sectors, or across government-levels and sector departments).

^d UNDP has committed to financing the running costs of the Safe Space for the first year estimated at 352,000 lei (20,000 USD) while the services are being established.

Testing innovative local action to address Gender-based Violence

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT): multi-sectoral coordination and participatory planning



Intervention: Establishing a local coordination mechanism to design, implement, monitor and evaluate a comprehensive Local GBV Action Plan including GBV prevention and response through a participatory planning and paying approach.



Evidence: Programmes that effectively reduce GBV are multi-sectoral, participatory and support greater communication and shared decision-making with community members and women's groups¹⁰.



Achievements to date:

- MDT established in October 2018, including the Mayor of Chirsova and local service providers (nurses, police officer, teachers, social workers and others).
- MDT trained in the proactive identification of GBV cases, their management and referral.
- MDT developed a Local Action Plan for 2019 aligned with the National GBV Plan, based on the situational analysis as well as the latest evidence on effective GBV prevention approaches, and incorporating inputs from local authorities, Public Council members and the community during several participatory discussions and public hearings.

The Safe Space: Providing direct assistance and protection for survivors as well as prevention of future violence



Intervention: Establish the Centre for Assistance of Victims of Intimate Partner Violence as a regional Safe Space integrating support services and a shelter for women and their children and GBV prevention approaches - the first of its kind in Moldova.



Evidence: Women-centered interventions using a combination of strategies (psychosocial support, advocacy and counselling) can effectively reduce a woman's risk of further victimization and experience of violence¹⁰.



Achievements to date: Chirsova's Local Council donated a building and renovation of the Safe Space is underway (July-Dec 2019), with co-financing from regional authorities (the Bashkanat ATU Gagauzia), UNDP and a crowdfunding campaign.



Next steps:

- Recruitment of Safe Space staff.
- Opening of Safe Space in January 2020.
- Handover the Safe Space to the Directorate of Public Health and Social Protection in 2021 with a staffing scheme and a budget.



The CETA approach: Mental health support



Intervention: Training service providers to deliver vital psychological support to GBV survivors that addresses the underlying causes of GBV by adapting the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) to the Moldovan context for the first time, as a sustainable solution to the limited mental health resources.



Evidence: CETA is an integrated treatment programme that effectively addresses multiple co-existing problems (depression, trauma, substance abuse, aggression) concurrently in families impacted by violence. CETA has been applied in several low-and-middle income countries with limited mental health infrastructure and workforce (e.g. Zambia and Ukraine)^{11,12}. In a recent trial in Zambia, CETA was shown to significantly reduce physical and sexual violence against women and alcohol abuse among men and women¹³.



Next steps:

- CETA training materials are currently being adapted to the Moldova context, drawing on the experience in neighboring Ukraine.
- CETA training for Safe Space staff and other local service providers (including the MDT) is planned for March 2020, followed by ongoing support to trainees from Ukrainian colleagues trained in CETA.
- CETA sessions will be offered to beneficiaries from April to December 2020.

Economic Empowerment Activities (EEA): support survivors' economic independence



Intervention: EEAs offered at the Safe Space to support the economic reintegration of women and other disadvantaged groups through a local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) formed by project beneficiaries.



Evidence: EEA can potentially ensure vulnerable groups' economic independence to break the cycle of violence, particularly when used in combination with social empowerment¹⁰, and can also mitigate triggers of violence related to financial stress in households.



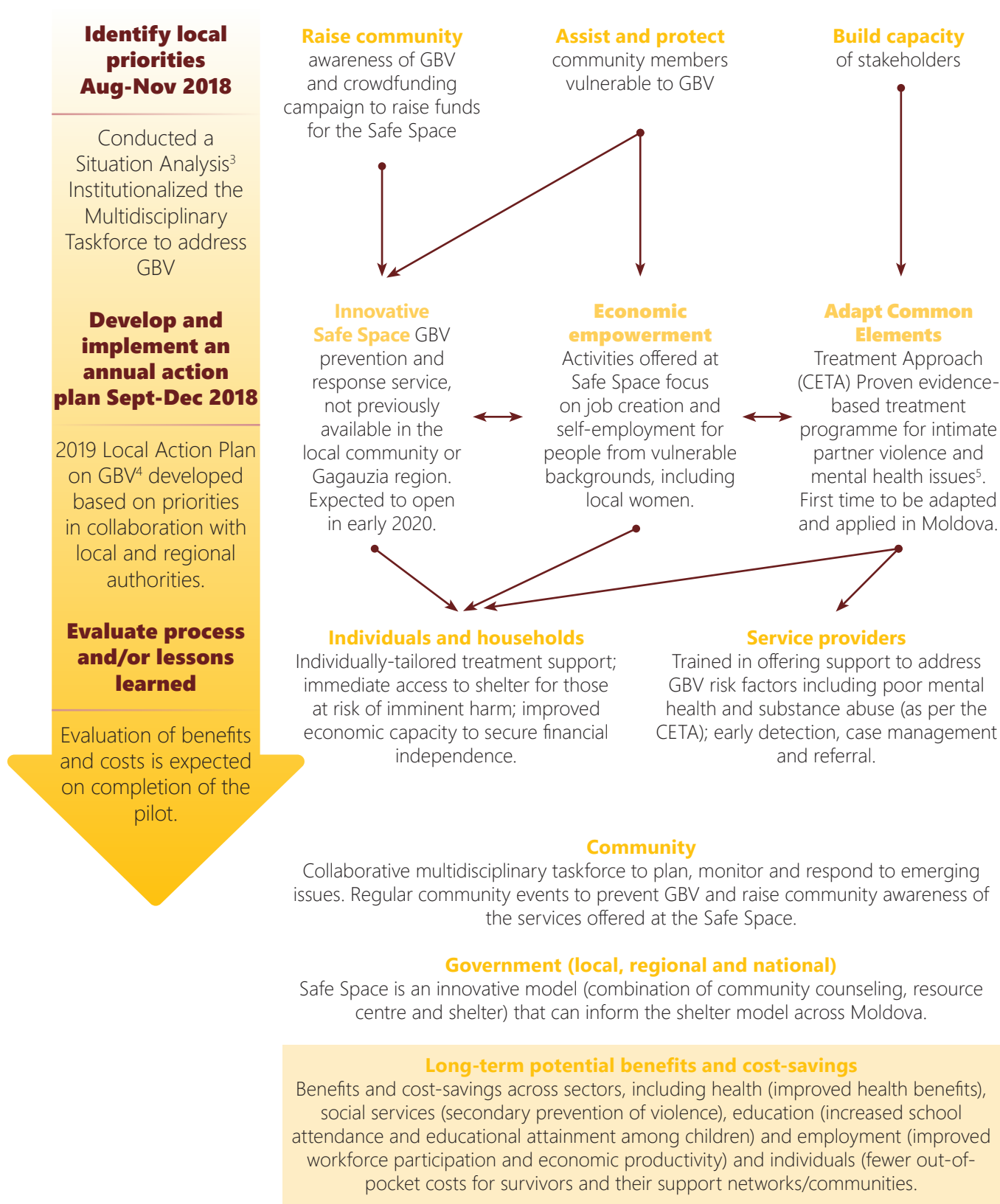
Next steps:

- Training of Safe Space beneficiaries to start their own businesses through a self-employment micro-finance grant programme (2020)
- Supporting local business women to extend their business and create new jobs through grants (2020)



Expected result: 10 new enterprises/small businesses established by end 2020.

Figure 1. Timeline of participatory activities informing local action



How can policy-makers contribute to sustaining these efforts?



The pilot in Chirsova is laying the foundation for an innovative evidence-based approach to eradicating GBV in Moldova. Its sustainability will require specific commitments and action from policy-makers.

This project has enabled for the first time the localization of the National GBV Strategy in Moldova through the participatory development of the GBV Local Action Plan incorporating input from key local stakeholders including the local government, service providers, survivors and the community in line with 'leaving no one behind'.

The activities during the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* in 2018, implemented through the collaborative work of UNDP, the MDT and local NGOs, were successful in raising community awareness at the local and regional levels (through school workshops and a theatre performance titled 'I Won't Let Hope Die' (Я умереть надежде не дам)).

Invest time, physical and financial resources

Eliminating GBV requires sustained action to ensure that political commitments translate into meaningful change, and support for coordinated, well-funded, evidence-informed strategies implemented by governments, communities, and civil society partners⁹. Policy-makers have a pivotal role to play by investing resources and budgets in establishing and maintaining participatory processes, and in evidence-based activities that respond to the needs of GBV survivors and prevent the experience of violence.

The local and regional government contributions noted previously (e.g. allocation of a building for the Safe Space and financial contribution for its renovation) are supporting the implementation of Chirsova's GBV Local Action Plan¹⁴ overseen by the MDT. Establishing and training a local MDT to plan and implement a comprehensive local plan of action (including prevention and awareness raising activities as well as response measures to identify and address the needs of survivors) could be replicated to other localities in ATU Gagauzia and Moldova.



Photo: Ion Buga/UNDP

Bring more stakeholders and payers to the table

The services within Chirsova's GBV Local Action Plan¹⁴ require cross-sectoral collaboration and can produce multiple benefits for the health and social welfare sectors, as well as substantial cost savings in law enforcement, education and employment. Thus, several sectors would benefit from further collaboration and investment in sustaining these activities to realise efficiency gains.

By recognizing these multi-sectoral benefits and cost savings, policy-makers can attract more stakeholders and consolidate contributions from multiple payers, increasing the efficiency and impact of traditionally separate financing streams. Sharing responsibility and ownership for implemented activities within the plan is likely to result in more flexible, coordinated, sustainable and accountable Local Action Plans.

Fundraising campaign to supplement the costs of establishing a center for assisting domestic violence survivors in the region of Gagauzia (the Safe Space)

An innovative crowdfunding campaign was launched nationally on 10 December 2018 (International Human Rights Day) by UNDP in collaboration with the regional government of ATU Gagauzia to supplement the cost of renovating the Safe Space (including purchasing furniture). Donations are collected through the site <https://sprijina.md/campaign/contribuie-la-crearea-primului-adapost-pentru-supravietuitoarele-violentei-in-familie-din-uta-gagauzia/>. The campaign raised 74,537 lei (4,250 USD) by October 2019. The crowdfunding campaign is also serving to raise awareness and engage additional potential partners and sectors with the support of the national and regional press. For instance, a charity fair was conducted on April 2019 to support the fundraising campaign, which was attended by several journalists, bloggers, and musicians.



Photo: Ion Buga/UNDP

Learn and replicate what works in other villages and regions in Moldova for maximum impact

Chirsova's GBV Local Action Plan translates national policies into local concerns and solutions for the first time in the region of Gagauzia.

UNDP has provided the technical support to establish a functional MDT in Chirsova and has built its capacity to develop, implement and review comprehensive annual GBV Local Action Plans in collaboration with local and regional authorities. A 2020 plan is currently being developed by the MDT and will be publicly discussed to prioritise interventions according to their value for money, and advocate for funding to implement the plan from both governmental and non-governmental partners, including the private sector.

It is expected that by the end of 2020, local and regional authorities will have ongoing commitments to implementing annual Local Action Plans in Chirsova and incorporate the valuable lessons and best practices for local participatory planning and paying to inform further replication of successful interventions in other localities with high GBV prevalence, ensuring equitable geographical coverage.

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Lessons from the Chirsova pilot - a Global Public Good for GBV prevention and response

The pilot in Chirsova will generate new knowledge and understanding on:

- how to localize a national GBV plan with maximum participation and meaningful community engagement
- how to adapt evidence-based intervention models in new settings, specifically the CETA model
- what are the costs of participatory planning and the value for money of intervention models like CETA and economic empowerment activities for survivors

Lessons learned in the design and implementation of Chirsova's Local Action Plan will contribute to global policy and programming to prevent and respond to GBV. The experience and evidence on what worked will inform the adaptation, replication and scaling up of Chirsova's model as a mechanism to accelerate action and achieve impact across multiple SDGs.

Further reading

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