

## ANALYTICAL REPORT

**State authorities' response  
to the cases of domestic violence  
during crisis situations (in particular,  
COVID-19) and recommendations  
for improvement**





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COVID-19) and recommendations  
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Kyiv 2021

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# 1. Introduction

In early April 2020, when in attempt to slow down the spread of coronavirus infection, almost all countries around the world were actively launching quarantine measures, including lockdowns, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was the first to officially acknowledge the increased number of domestic violence against women during lockdown<sup>1</sup>. Around the same time Evelyn Regner, Chair of the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, also announced the problem and called on the European Union and EU member-states to take active efforts to solve it<sup>2</sup>.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in the first three months of the lockdown the whole world witnessed the increased number of domestic violence between intimate partners up to 20%<sup>3</sup>, and, according to their prognosis, every next three months of the lockdown would result in 15 million more cases of gender-based violence<sup>4</sup>. UN Women<sup>5</sup> and UNICEF<sup>6</sup> also reported an increased number of domestic violence cases seen in the first months of the lockdown, varying from 25% to 250% in different countries. At the same time the number of registered cases presumably might not reflect the true picture, since many women are locked with their offenders and are not able to report their problem to the respective authorities as in pre-lockdown times. Overall, the number of gender-based and domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic increased so significantly that the phenomenon has come to be called the "shadow pandemic".

The majority of international and civil society organizations report about difficulties in the work of support services for victims of domestic violence<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, services that provide assistance to child victims of violence have been even more significantly affected than services that provide assistance to adults. According to UNICEF, at least 104 countries, home to a total of 1.8 billion children between the ages of 0 and 17, have reported failures in prevention, response and support services working with child victims of domestic violence. Eastern Europe is the leading in the list of countries that have experienced such failures.

<sup>1</sup> [https://twitter.com/antonioguterres/status/1246973397759819776?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1246973397759819776%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dw.com%2Fuk%2Fhensek-oon-zaiavyv-pro-zbilshennia-vypadkiv-nasylstva-nad-zhinkamy-cherez-karantyn%2Fa-53026725](https://twitter.com/antonioguterres/status/1246973397759819776?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1246973397759819776%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dw.com%2Fuk%2Fhensek-oon-zaiavyv-pro-zbilshennia-vypadkiv-nasylstva-nad-zhinkamy-cherez-karantyn%2Fa-53026725)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200406IPR76610/covid-19-stopping-the-rise-in-domestic-violence-during-lockdown>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/blog/2020/dafina-gercheva--covid-19-pandemic-puts-spotlight-on-domestic-vi.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>, c. 17

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/76916/file/Gender-Based-Violence-in-Emergencies-CP-Learning-Brief-Aug-2020.pdf>, c. 3

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/brief-covid-19-and-essential-services-provision-for-survivors-of-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3834>, c. 3

## 2. Objectives and methodology of the research

This research aims at understanding the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the situation with domestic violence in Ukraine, and identifying the specific responses of authorized subjects to the cases of domestic violence in Ukraine due to quarantine restrictions. Since the “shadow pandemic” has reached all countries around the globe, experience, best practices, tendencies and challenges faced by other countries should be taken into account to understand the effectiveness of Ukrainian response. Based on the analysis, a set of recommendations for state authorities, particularly those responsible for actions against domestic violence during crisis, COVID-19 pandemic in particular, were to be developed, and algorithms of actions for victims and authorized subjects were to be designed.

To reach these objectives we conducted the analysis of:

- statistical data about calls to the National hotlines run by the CSO “La Strada-Ukraine”;
- statistics of administrative and criminal proceedings of courts and law enforcement before and during lockdown;
- legal acts related to prevention and countering domestic violence adopted during COVID-19 pandemic;
- results of the surveys done on the National hotlines;
- results of online discussions where some countries from the region (Belarus, Bulgaria and Moldova) shared their experience and best practices of responding to domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic.

Surveys on the National hotlines – National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and National Hotline for Children and Youth – were aimed at understanding specific responses of state authorities, general and specialized victim support services (including police, courts, social services, shelters and medical institutions) to the cases of domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic.

Questionnaires with open- and closed-ended questions were used as a tool for the surveys.

Surveys were conducted by National hotlines' consultants via phone. Also victims were able to fill in the questionnaires, available online via CSO “La Strada-Ukraine” social networks pages.

The research was conducted within the project “State response to domestic violence in Ukraine during COVID-19” implemented with financial support of the Black Sea Trust Fund for Regional Cooperation.

### 3. General overview of the situation with domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine

The analysis of statistics has shown that during COVID-19 pandemic Ukraine has seen a large increase of gender-based and domestic violence.

Such tendency was registered by the Hotlines of the CSO “La Strada-Ukraine”. Indeed, comparing to the same period before lockdown the number of calls to the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination increased one and a half to two times. Particularly large growth was seen in the first months after the start of quarantine restrictions, as well as during periods of increasing incidence of COVID-19. While in January-March 2020, before lockdown, the Hotline usually received 1600-1700 calls per month, in April 2692 calls were received, in May – 2931 calls. When total lockdown was cancelled, and there were some improvements in the incidence rate, the number of calls slightly decreased (June – 2165 calls, July – 2328, August – 2333, September – 2792, October – 2601). However, when at the end of October-November 2020 the epidemiological situation in Ukraine became worse again, the number of calls to the Hotline reached a new record (November – 3361 calls, December – 3371). In 2021, the number of calls continued to depend on epidemiological situations: 3010 calls in January, 2757 – in February, 3028 – in March.

The National Hotline for Children and Youth has seen the similar tendency, but even more vivid. Indeed, before the lockdown (January-February 2020, in particular) the hotline received 1500-1600 calls per month. After March 12, 2020, when Ukraine launched the lockdown, the number of calls to the Hotline increased 5 to 7 times. Same as at the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination, after rapid increase in the first months of the lockdown (in March 2020, 6812 calls received, April – 8111, May – 10479), the next 6 months the number of calls slightly decreased (7973 calls in June, 5380 – in July, 5613 – in August, 9224 – in September, 6638 – in October), and then significantly increased again (10 536 calls in November, 24 630 – in December). In the first three months of 2021 the number of calls to the National Hotline for Children and Youth continued to grow (11 274 calls received in January, 14 265 – in February, 16 281 – in March). In comparison to the numbers received in early 2020, the number of calls during the pandemic times increased 10 times.

Data on the rapid increase of domestic violence during the pandemic are confirmed by statistics on the number of complaints and proceedings related to domestic violence, which were registered during this period by law enforcement and judicial authorities. Indeed, in 2019 the National Police of Ukraine registered 141814 allegations and reports on offenses and other events related to domestic violence. In 2020 this figure increased by a third to 208784 reports. According to the Office

of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, in 2020 the number of criminal proceedings under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine («Domestic Violence») made 2212 cases, whereas in 2019 this number was twice lower – 1068 criminal offenses. In the first 4 months of 2021 1095 offenses were registered under this article. In 2019 the courts of first instance received 626 criminal proceedings under Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, in 2020 – 1877, which is three times more.

The main part of the report highlights, that during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions Ukraine has not only seen an increase in the scale and intensity of domestic violence, but also difficulties in the work of authorized subjects (in particular, judicial and law enforcement agencies, medical facilities, specialized support services for victims) and in the access of victims to the relevant services. In other words, our state has faced the same problems and challenges as other countries. The international community warned us about this almost at the beginning of the pandemic. This raises the question of how exactly the states and, in particular, Ukraine, respond to these challenges, primarily at the legislative level.

Since the launch of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic (March 12, 2020), Ukraine passed a number of legal acts in the area of prevention and countering gender-based and domestic violence<sup>8</sup>. The period of their adoption allows us to monitor how state authorities accounted for the effect of the pandemic on the situation with domestic violence, while designing and adopting the relevant legislation.

On September 21, 2020, the President of Ukraine passed his Decree On “Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and to Protect the Rights of Victims of Such Violence” № 398/2020. Although the Decree does not directly mention the context of the pandemic, it provides a set of measures to improve both legislation and law enforcement practices in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence, which the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should include in its detailed action plan to provide a comprehensive integrated approach to countering domestic violence. Analysis of the measures proposed in the Decree shows that a number of them relate to the protection of children victims of domestic violence (for example, improving the procedure for receiving and processing reports on domestic violence against children and involving children, identifying children victims of domestic violence, as well as organizing assistance and protection; providing additional procedural guarantees to minors during their interrogation, interviews during criminal proceedings based on best international practices, in particular the Barnahus model, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of March 11, 2020 № 211 «On prevention of the spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in Ukraine» (Official Gazette of Ukraine, 2020, № 23, p. 896, № 30, art. 1061), dated May 20, 2020 № 392 “On establishing quarantine in order to prevent the spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 on the territory of Ukraine” (Official Gazette of Ukraine, 2020, № 43, art. 1394, № 52, art. 1626), dated July 22, 2020 № 641 “On the establishment of quarantine and the introduction of enhanced anti-epidemic measures in the area with a significant spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2” (Official Gazette of Ukraine, 2020, № 63, p. 2029), dated December 9, 2020 № 1236 (On the establishment of quarantine and the introduction of restrictive anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of acute respiratory disease in Ukraine COVID-19, caused coronavirus SARS-CoV-2) (Official Gazette of Ukraine, 2021, № 1, Art. 14, № 5, p. 272, № 17, p. 664, № 19, p. 811).

To implement the mentioned above order the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on April 21, 2021 approved the Plan of immediate actions to prevent and counteract domestic violence, gender-based violence and to protect victims of such violence (Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 361-p dated 21/04/2021).

On February 24, 2021 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the State Social Programme on Prevention and Counteraction of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence till 2025 (Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 145 dated 24/02/2021). The purpose of this program is to improve the mechanism for preventing and combating domestic and gender-based violence in the context of decentralization according to international standards. This document does not directly mention the impact of the pandemic on the situation of domestic violence in Ukraine. At the same time, such large-scale crisis as the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the work of actors involved in preventing and combating domestic and gender-based violence, especially in the context of continued decentralization reform.

The State Social Program for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence for the period up to 2025 pays attention to the protection of children victims of domestic violence. In particular, it includes such activities as providing training for judges, prosecutors, attorneys, and investigators on the implementation of the legislation in the best interests of a child who has witnessed or been a victim of violence; mandatory special training for investigators, investigators conducting pre-trial investigations, and prosecutors supervising compliance with the law during pre-trial investigations in the form of procedural guidance in proceedings involving a child; training of employees of territorial hromadas on interdepartmental response to cases of child abuse; informing children, their parents and other legal representatives about the rights of the child, activities and services that they can use in each local community; introducing tools for risk assessment of recidivism for planning social and educational work with children, etc. The other part of the measures is aimed at improving the functioning of those areas where child victims are currently insufficiently identified and, accordingly, do not receive the level of protection provided to adult victims, or those where working with child victims requires a special approach compared to adult victims. These include access to justice for children and other mechanisms for the protection and provision of services and, in particular, access to free secondary legal aid for children with the involvement of a lawyer; providing an individual approach to the interrogation of children; providing appropriate conditions for holding court hearings in a child-friendly environment, etc.

Another important focus of the Programme worth mentioning is identification of certain tasks of the territorial hromadas in coordinating assistance to victims of domestic violence. This aspect is important because in the context of decentralization territorial hromadas overtake responsibilities in identifying needs of the people living in hromada in specialized services for victims of domestic violence and in creating specialized support services. Among the examples of such tasks reflected in the Program: identifying the needs of the local community in social services to prevent violence, planning the provision of social services for victims in accordance with the needs assessment, identifying funding needs; use of the social procurement of social services to victims as one of services provision mechanisms; identification of needs and creation of specialized support services for victims;

inclusion into the socio-economic development programs of the measures aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence and / or gender-based violence in community; taking measures to provide territorial hromadas with specialists in social work, psychologists, specialists in identifying persons / families who are in difficult life circumstances; expanding access to primary health care, mental health services for victims of rape, physical and / or sexual violence, etc. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the adoption on November 30, 2020 of the Methodology for Determining the Needs of Territorial Hromadas in Creating Specialized Support Services for Victims of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence (Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine of November 30, 2020 № 787). This Methodology does not focus on any crisis / emergency situation in identifying or reviewing the need to establish appropriate specialized services in local communities, in particular in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Generally legal acts adopted during COVID-19 pandemic do not take into account the context of the pandemic and its effect on prevention and countering domestic violence, particularly challenges faced in this period by victims or authorized agencies.

As for the effectiveness of the response of authorized agencies to cases of domestic violence, the overall picture is quite difficult to assess, in particular due to the lack of comprehensive qualitative research and detailed statistics. However, based on the available quantitative indicators, which, in particular, relate to the effectiveness of administrative and criminal proceedings in such cases, we can see the following. Indeed, in 2019, National Police received 141814 reports about domestic violence or related events, which resulted in 106,721 administrative protocols issued, and 2776 cases with pre-trial investigations launched. In 2020, 208784 reports (182088 received from women and 3433 – from children) resulted in 132,760 administrative protocols issued and 4931 pre-trial investigations initiated. Hence, we see a 12 percent decrease in the number of protocols issued in 2020 compared to 2019, and the share of cases in which a pre-trial investigation was launched has not changed.

Data from the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine show that in 2019 under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code 1068 offences were registered, 778 individuals were notified about being suspects of the crime, 775 cases were sent to courts, 496 cases were closed. In 2020, 2212 proceedings were registered, 1877 individuals received notifications about being suspects of the crime, 1823 proceedings were sent to courts, and 827 cases closed. Such data demonstrate that investigations in cases under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code in 2020 slightly improved in their effectiveness compared to 2019.

In 2019 Ukrainian courts heard 319 criminal proceedings out of 626 registered under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code and related to domestic violence, 226 sentences issued. Among 156 victims – 151 women and 6 children. In 2020 the courts of first instance heard 1194 out of 1877 proceedings registered under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code, 926 sentences issued. Among 649 victims – 597 women and 6 children. Hence, in 2020 compared to 2019 the number of proceedings heard increased, however the number of sentences issued slightly decreased. Another important focus is the very small number of children acknowledged as victims under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code, which shows lack of appropriate access for this category to the justice system.

In 2019 the police issued 15 878 temporary protective orders (15 259 – against men and 616 – against women). In 2020 the number of such restraining orders was 41 963 (37 920 – against men, 4 007 – against women, 36 – against children). Such a drastic increase, except by increase of domestic violence cases, can also be explained by the fact that only in the middle of 2019 the mechanism of restraining orders started to be used in practice, and time was needed for practice to become smooth and unified. In 2019 the courts of first instance received 710 applications for the issuance and extension of the restrictive order in civil proceedings, 595 considered, 353 satisfied. In 2020, 998 applications were received, 843 considered, 500 satisfied. In 2020 we see the increased number of applications for restraining orders, which, on the one hand, is indicative of an increase in domestic violence, however, the increased number of applications is disproportionate to the increased rates of violence. It might mean that victims have insufficient access to justice. The share of considered and satisfied applications during 2020 compared to 2019 has not changed. However, this is not a very positive trend, as the corresponding figure in 2019 was quite low (only 84% of applications were considered and about 50% of applications were satisfied by the court).

## 4. Surveys of the victims of domestic violence on the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and National Hotline for Children and Youth about state authorities' responses to domestic violence cases during COVID-19 pandemic

Since October 2020 till March 2021 two surveys were conducted among the respondents of the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and National Hotline for Children and Youth run by the CSO “La Strada-Ukraine”.

The timeframe of the surveys only covered the cases of domestic violence happened since the introduction of the quarantine measures in Ukraine on March 12, 2020.

The survey on the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination took place since October 2020 to February 2021, and on the National Hotline for Children and Youth – since October 2020 till March 2021.

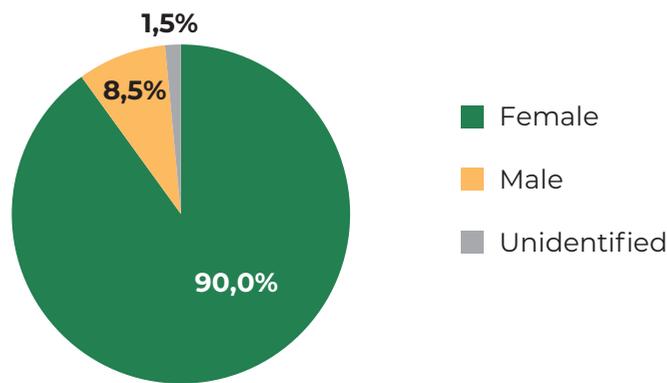
The statistics from the Hotlines of CSO “La Strada-Ukraine” presented in the previous chapter show, that the number of calls was increasing together with worsening of the epidemiological situation in the country. This provided the possibility for a more representative sample of the respondents interviewed.

### 4.1. Analysis of the results of the surveys on the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination

The surveys on the National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination were conducted with the aim to understand the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the situation with domestic violence in Ukraine and identify the specificity of responses of certain authorized agencies (courts, police, centres of social services for families, children and youth, shelters, medical facilities) to the reports about such violence and provision of support needed for victims. The survey only covered adults suffering from domestic violence.

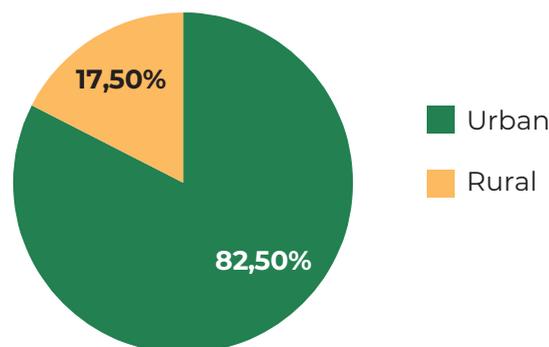
Totally 303 people took part in the surveys, 90% of them were women, 8.5% - men (another 1.5% were not sure with the answer). The majority of people interviewed were 31 to 40 (39.6%) and 41 to 50 years old (29.4%). Relatively small number of respondents were at the age 51 to 60 (13.2%), 19 to 30 (8.9%) and 61 to 70 (5.9%). The smallest number of people interviewed were over 71 years old (2%).

### Breakdown by sex



According to the geographical distribution, the largest number of calls came from Kyiv and Kyiv oblast (18% and 10%, respectively), Dnipropetrovsk (7.9%), Kharkiv (6.9%), Lviv (5.9%), Zhytomyr (5.3%) and Odessa (5.3%) oblasts. In general, respondents from all regions of Ukraine took part in the survey, except for the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The vast majority (82.5%) of respondents lived in cities and only 17.5% said they lived in rural areas.

### Breakdown by place of residence



Aside from sex, age and place of residence, the respondents were asked about their status:

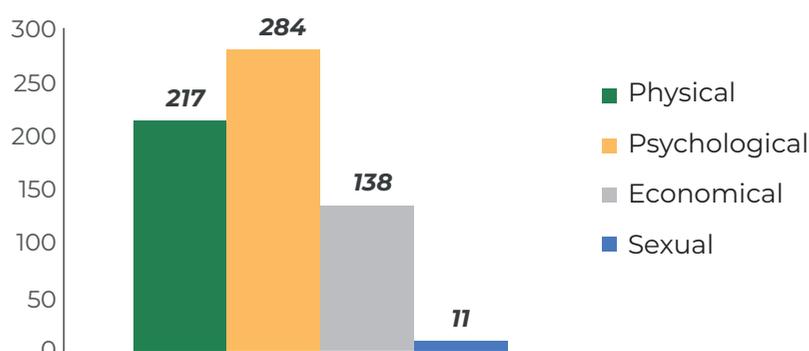
- 58 respondents (19%) indicated that they have low income;
- 41 respondents (13,5%) – retired;
- 24 respondents (7,9%) – multi-children parents;
- 16 respondents (5,3%) – people with disabilities;
- 13 respondents (4,3%) – parents of new-born children, toddlers or underage children;
- 7 respondents (2,3%) – internally displaced persons;
- 2 respondents (0,6%) – war veterans;
- 2 respondents (0,6%) – police officers;
- 2 respondents (0,6%) – mothers of children with disabilities;

- 1 respondent (0,3%) – ATO participants;
- 1 respondent (0,3%) – mother-heroine;
- 1 respondent (0,3%) – in psychiatric treatment.

It is interesting that the vast majority of respondents (51 out of 58 people) who stated that they were low-income called the Hotline by phone. And only 7 respondents who filled out the questionnaire online, classified themselves in this category. This may indicate that people with low income do not always have access to online technology and are therefore deprived of access to appropriate channels of assistance, which may be particularly relevant in crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

By forms of violence: 217 respondents (71,6%) suffered from physical violence, 284 (93,7%) – from psychological, 138 (45,5%) – economical and 11 (3,6%) – sexual. It should be noted that respondents who filled out the questionnaire online (namely, every eleventh respondent) more often indicated, that they had suffered from sexual violence. Only one in forty respondents who called by phone reported sexual violence. This may be an indication that respondents are not always ready to talk on the issue via phone. Accordingly, cases of sexual violence remain largely latent.

### Breakdown by forms of domestic violence



## Authorised subjects response

### COURTS

Since the introduction of quarantine measures in Ukraine (March 12, 2020), only 18 (5.9%) of 303 respondents, have applied to the court for a restraining order.

The majority of respondents who did not apply for restraining order, namely 135 people (44.5%) of 285, did not apply because there was reportedly no need. 46 respondents (15.2%) did not apply because they did not believe in a positive outcome in their case, 10 respondents (3.3%) did not know about the existence of such a mechanism to protect their rights. 2 respondents noted that it was difficult for them to move independently, especially in quarantine conditions. One respondent stated that she felt sorry for the offender because he would have nowhere to go during the lockdown.

Analysis of the respondents' responses to this question shows that they mostly did not apply for restrictive orders, because they either did not believe in the justice

system, or weren't sufficiently informed of existing mechanisms of protection from domestic violence. Moreover, lockdown restrictions also influenced the eagerness of the victims to go to court.

In cases where victims applied to the courts for a restraining order, in general, the 72-hour deadline for consideration of such applications was observed and there were no special difficulties with access to the court to file an application. Hearings on such cases, as the respondents reported, took place in the courtrooms in the presence of the parties.

At the same time in certain cases appeared some problems :

### **Questionnaire 199**

*The respondent's appeal at the moment of the call was not yet considered. It was sent by mail to the court on January 9, 2021. On January 12, 2021 it was delivered to the court, and by January 19, 2021 wasn't considered yet. When she came to the court in person, it was closed due to a lockdown.*

### **Questionnaire 230**

*The respondent was waiting for the court hearing the whole week.*

Certain respondents reported difficulties in registering their applications in a court, as well as difficulties related to public transport being closed. They had to look for alternative ways to get to the court.

In general, the results of the survey did not identify many cases when the court would delay consideration of the application. The majority of complaints concerned the limited access to the courtroom due to closed public transport and courts during the lockdown. When the courts are closed and do not see visitors in person, the victims have to send their applications by mail. And the time for mailing is not taken into consideration. Besides, there is always a risk of losing the documents in the mail. Domestic violence cases have shortened time limits for consideration (not more than 72 hours). Hence such delays in their consideration are unacceptable, since the victims are forced to stay in one household with their offenders the whole time, which is dangerous. Therefore, this aspect should be taken into account in planning state authorities' response to domestic violence in critical situations.

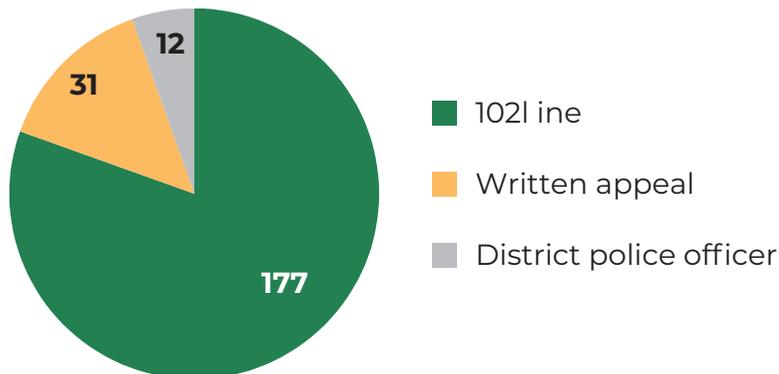
## **POLICE**

220 respondents (72.6%) of 303 interviewed reported the domestic violence incident to police. Those who did not report to police, shared that they were afraid to implicate the relationships with the offender (60), or did not trust the police (18).

177 (80.5%) of 220 persons who were interviewed and said they reported to police, made it via 102 phone line, 31 of them (14%) made a written report, and 12 people (5/5%) contacted their district police officer. None of the respondents interviewed used Telegram chat-bot #ДійПротиНасильства (#ActAgainstViolence) launched

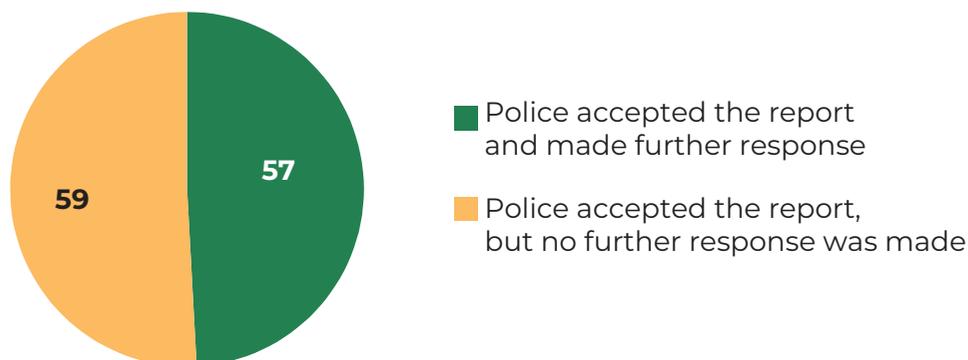
in April 2020 by the Ministry of Interior to improve response to domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic.

### Breakdown by type of reporting to police



144 of 220 respondents (65,5%) informed that the police responded to their report about domestic violence, 76 (34,5%) said that police did not respond. At the same time, when asked to identify the forms of the response, only half of respondents (57 people) reported that police accepted the statement and acted further (opened the administrative proceeding, criminal proceeding or issued the temporary protective order), the other half (59 people) informed that police only accepted the statement, however no further response was made.

### Breakdown by police response



The victims claimed that even when the police arrived, they only talked and warned the offender; or the police issued an emergency barring order, but did not accept the statement, or on the contrary – accepted the statement, but did not issue an emergency barring order. Moreover, in many cases victims complained that the police openly sided with the offender, depreciating the situation and sufferings of the victim, advised the offender to make counter-complaint or qualified the situation as “family matter”, which was not their business; or even fined the victims for false report. Some respondents reported cases of corruption. There were reported also other violations from police side:

9 <https://www.facebook.com/mvs.gov.ua/photos/a.737527876333906/2906141006139238/?type=3&theater>

### **Questionnaire 73**

*The respondent complained that the police threatened her with the possibility of being charged as an offender and losing custody over her children. They refused to compile administrative protocol.*

### **Questionnaire 100**

*According to the respondent, the police were armed during communication and threatened her with arms in the presence of a child. They did not accept her report, and she felt in danger.*

### **Questionnaire 101**

*The respondent informed she was forced by police to take her report back.*

20 of the respondents who complained about the lack of police response said they did not accept the statement, another 20 said that police didn't even come.

128 persons surveyed sensed that police took their matter seriously, 80 did not feel this way. In the majority of cases, where the respondents claimed that the police treated their situation not seriously, the respondents meant the situations, when the police considered the domestic violence episode as the family argument; fined the victim for false reports; did not consider the situation as violent because of the lack of signs of beatings; blamed the victim for provoking etc. The respondents also described the following cases:

### **Questionnaire 38**

*The police interviewed the victim for a long time, asking for many details, and then asked to wait for POLINA. The woman was left on the street with a child at 22.30.*

### **Questionnaire 73**

*On the request of the respondent to compile the protocol, the police officers threatened they could open criminal proceedings against her and take the children away.*

### **Questionnaire 81**

*After the emergency barring order was issued, the offender did not comply with it. The respondent called the police, however the violation was not registered.*

### **Questionnaire 155**

*The victim needed medical attention at the moment the police arrived. However, the police officers did not offer assistance, nor did they accept the statement.*

156 respondents said the police interviewed them separately from the offender, 49 – in one room with the offender. At least 6 respondents said the police did not interview them at all.

Only 37 of 220 interviewed (18.8%) informed that police issued emergency barring orders, 23 of them were issued upon the request of the victim, 14 – by police

initiative. Only in 15 cases (6.8%) the respondents mentioned that before denying the protective orders the police made a risk assessment, 84 respondents (38,2%) said that no risk assessment was made. Respondents complained that the police either did not provide them with information on the existence and grounds for such orders, or openly misinformed them about the possibility of obtaining them (for example, that the police do not have the authority to issue emergency barring orders, such orders are issued only after 3 calls, or that they are issued only by the court). Here are some example:

#### **Questionnaire 157**

*The respondent was abused by her husband. The man has an unregistered gun and threatened to kill her with it. The police told the respondent, they couldn't do anything since the offender denies everything, and the order could only be issued by the court.*

In some cases, the respondents complained, that the restraining order the implementation of which cannot be ensured by police, is not effective:

#### **Questionnaire 238**

*The Hotline received a call from a father whose daughter is systematically abused by her husband. They live separately, but they have a common child. The police stopped responding to the reports of the woman in a due way, sometimes they simply don't come after her calls, and though they might accept her reports, but those reports never come to the police office. The emergency barring order was issued, however violated numerously with no reaction from the police.*

In some cases, the police directly linked the refusal to issue emergency barring order with the lockdown restrictions:

#### **Questionnaire 137**

*The respondent reported that police officers refused to issue an emergency barring order, since the offender said he was ill at the time. The police officers explained that during lockdown they cannot oblige a person to leave home. In the course of the consultation it became clear the man had no documents or medical records proving his disease.*

#### **Questionnaire 240**

*The respondent informed that the police said that emergency barring orders during lockdown can only be issued in certain cases.*

The lockdown itself affected the behaviour of the victims as well, in terms of willingness to invoke protection methods. For instance:

#### **Questionnaire 254**

*The respondent asked the police to not issue the protective order, since her son had nowhere to go, because everything was closed.*

In certain cases, the respondents reported cases of domestic violence in the families of police officers and militaries, left without any police response.

### **Questionnaire 245**

*The respondent is abused by her husband, who works for the police. After report to the police, they refuse to respond, since his friends work there.*

### **Questionnaire 248**

*The respondent with the child 1.5 years old reported being abused by her husband – military officer.*

The police officers also suffer from domestic violence. Indeed, a respondent reported being abused by her ex-husband, though she is a civil activist and works on the 102 police line over a year. At the moment of the call she was waiting for the district police officer. The victim of another case of domestic violence mentioned being law enforcement officer:

### **Questionnaire 198**

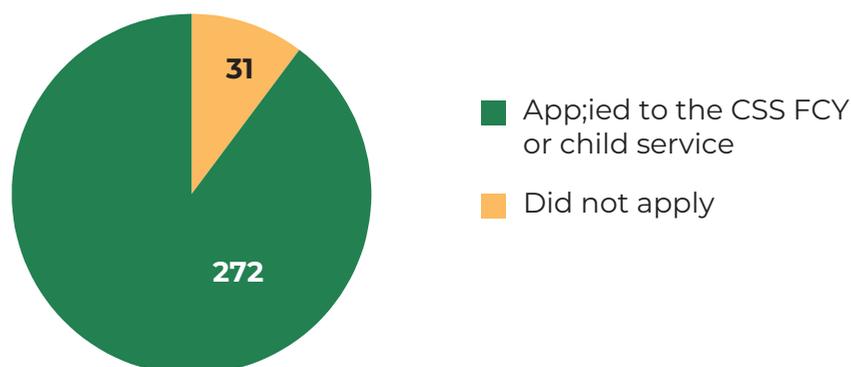
*Law enforcement officer reported being abused by his wife. Numerous calls to police ended in issuing emergency barring orders for both partners (limited communication). Once he was even brought to the disciplinary liability<sup>10</sup> (reprimand). His wife threatens him to go to his boss and make a complaint, if he continues reporting and making her to blame. The man was demoralized and needed help.*

## **CENTRES OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Only 31 respondents (10.2%) went to centres of social services for families, children and youth (CSSFCY) or child services. 198 respondents (65,3%) mentioned they did not need such services. 36 (11,9%) people at the moment of calling the hotline did not know about the existence of such services, their functions or that they provide services for victims of domestic violence. In 4 cases (1,3%) the respondents mentioned that they couldn't use such services, because they did not have contacts or didn't know where such services were available in the region. In some cases, the respondents mentioned, there were no such services in their area, or they were difficult to reach. Another 7 respondents (2,3%) expressed the lack of trust in these services (afraid to lose custody over children, afraid to make the situation worse, have previous negative experiences). Moreover, 15 people (5%) explained that respective services were not working during the lockdown.

<sup>10</sup> According to Article 15 of the Code of Administrative Offenses, police officers are liable for administrative offenses under disciplinary statutes.

### Breakdown by application to the centres of social services



7 of 31 people who applied for help acknowledged they received comprehensive assistance at the premises of CSSFCY / child services. 2 people received comprehensive online assistance. 11 respondents mentioned they received partial assistance, 10 - they didn't receive services they needed.

Among problems faced by the respondents the following can be identified: no psychologist in the staff; inability to provide shelters for victims, especially those who have children of different age; limited information for victims about available services and protection mechanisms; low quality of provided services; phone or online counselling only without personal meeting; stereotypes and siding with offender etc.

#### Questionnaire 82

*The respondent blamed the custody agency for siding with the offender - the mother of the child - who constantly offended, humiliated the child, and did not allow meetings with the father.*

#### Questionnaire 121

*Social worker proposed to place the respondent into a temporary shelter for victims of domestic violence. However, the shelter could only accommodate children under three years old. The woman has 5 children of different ages, all under 12, and she couldn't leave them with the offender. Hence, she refused to go to the shelter, and stayed with her friends.*

#### Questionnaire 136

*The respondent told that psychological assistance she received wasn't effective and was even traumatising. She felt she needed to persuade the psychologist that she experienced psychological violence (stalking, devaluations, threats, gaslighting), and that she didn't just make it up. The psychologist insisted that the actions of the husband was her fault (both parties to the conflict were guilty), and the restraining order or divorce wouldn't solve the problem.*

#### Questionnaire 250

*The respondent explained that she would go to the psychologist, if not for the lockdown. Online counselling wasn't an option, because her husband was always home. 2 months of the lockdown were very difficult for her, as she didn't have support or anyone to talk to.*

In some cases, the respondents reported the inadequate fulfilment of duties by the staff of the child services:

### Questionnaire 101

*The respondent, a mother of 7 children, ended up on the street due to aggressive behaviour and pressure from her husband. The child services couldn't help her, however suggested she buys the house, otherwise she could lose her children. The woman was frightened and didn't know what to do.*

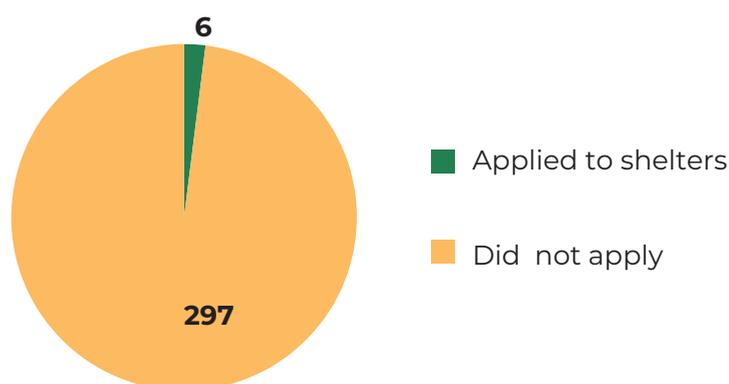
Based on the responses from the survey, we conclude that the work of the CSSFCY/ child services in the area of domestic violence does not always meet the expectations of the victims, and they do not receive what they count on. During lockdown and transitioning to phone and online work, the situation becomes worse. The victims can't receive the assistance possible in person. The most valuable and urgent for the respondents was help of psychologists and shelter referrals. Unfortunately, due to the lack of infrastructure, especially in newly formed hromadas and in the situation of COVID-19 pandemic, the corresponding services are often inaccessible.

## SHELTERS

Only 6 of 303 respondents (2%) applied to the shelters for victims of domestic violence. Among those who did not apply to shelters, 235 people (77.6%) said they did not need respective services. 20 respondents (6.6%) did not apply because they were sure that there would be no places in the shelter, 10 respondents (3.3%) did not know about the existence of shelters or that they accommodate victims of domestic violence. 8 people (2.6%) noted that they did not apply to shelters because they did not receive a referral from the services authorized to provide such a referral. 3 respondents (1%) said that the shelter was closed for quarantine, another 3 respondents noted that shelters were not available to them due to their limited abilities (disability, elder age, inability to move without assistance). They also mentioned actual restrictions on access to shelters due to the cut of electricity or the fact that shelters do not accept victims with children over 3 years old.

It should be noted that the belief of the respondents that they did not need shelter (235 people, or 77.6% in this survey) is not objective evidence that they did not really need shelter at the time of violence and / or at the time of the call to the hotline. For example, victims of domestic violence may be afraid of conflict escalation or increased harassment by the offender if they decide to go to the shelter; hope that if they do not commit any «provocative» actions, the offender will soon calm down; financially depend on the offender and fear uncertainty of the situation with the search for housing at the end of the stay in the shelter; not consider psychological violence to be the reason to search for shelter and associate domestic violence only with physical abuse. But this does not mean that such a need does not exist objectively.

## Breakdown by applying for shelter



Some respondents decided not to go to the shelter due to family matters (have dependent parents of older age, pets etc.). For instance:

**Questionnaire 152**

*The respondent did not apply for shelter, since she had elderly mother. She was also afraid to leave the house since the offender threatened to take it away. .*

**Questionnaire 148**

*The respondent decided not to go to the shelter, since she couldn't leave her cat and live there without it.*

In some cases, the victims did not apply for shelters because there wasn't one in their location, or because the shelters did not accommodate men.

**Questionnaire 198**

*The respondent said he knew the shelters did not accommodate men. Thus he did not apply for it.*

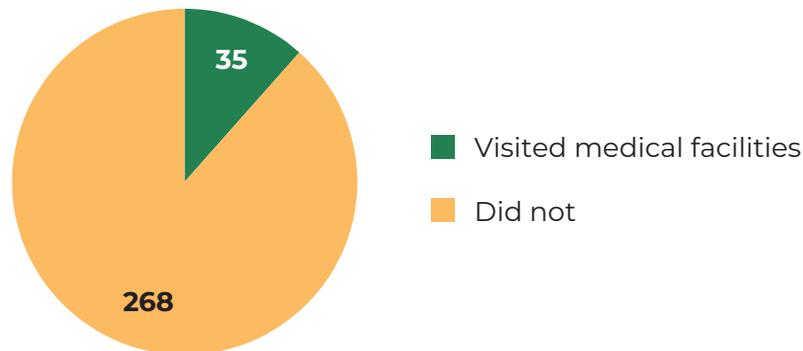
Only 3 of 6 people admitted to shelter were fully satisfied with the quality of the services provided.

Generally, based on the responses in the survey, conclusion can be made that demand for shelters during lockdown exists. However, the access to them is complicated with physical (unsuitable for people with disabilities, no shelters in certain oblasts, lack of resources, lack of places, or electricity etc.) and social challenges (no accommodation for people with children over 3 years old or children of different age, men, pets etc.). People are poorly informed about shelters; authorised agencies do not make referrals. During lockdowns some shelters are closed, hence victims face even more complications with accessing their services.

## MEDICAL FACILITIES

Among 303 respondents, only 35 people (11.6%) applied for medical attention. 17 people applied in order to obtain medical certificate of physical injuries as a result of domestic violence. Eleven of the 17 said they needed medical attention because of their injuries. At least 3 more respondents applied to medical institutions due to psychological damage.

Breakdown by visits to medical facilities



The situation with pandemic and lockdowns directly influenced the decisions of the victims to not seek for medical assistance, even in the cases when they needed it. Indeed, 12 respondents (4%) did not go to the doctor because they were afraid to get COVID-19 in the line; 9 people (3%) did not go to the doctor because of the official recommendation to only go to medical institution in extreme cases. They did not consider domestic violence to be such a case.

In some cases, doctors refused to visit the victims, or the victims couldn't get to the hospital on their own. For instance:

### Questionnaire 253

*The respondent called for a doctor, however she was explained doctors do not do home visits during lockdown.*

### Questionnaire 199

*The respondent couldn't get to the hospital due to the closed public transport.*

At least 4 respondents said they were afraid to seek medical attention because of threats from the offender. 2 more respondents answered that they did not see the need to apply due to the lack of visible beatings. Some respondents had no one to leave their children with. It is disturbing that at least 3 respondents (all filled out the questionnaire online) admitted that although they did not seek medical help themselves, the violence negatively affected their children's mental health, provoking neuroses, benign tumours etc.

## Victims' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on the situation with domestic violence against them and their loved ones

84 respondents (28%) believed the situation with domestic violence became worse since the launch of the lockdown. Only 30 respondents (10%) said that the situation has not changed much. In particular, respondents noted increased aggression, cruelty, frequency of violence by the offender; first episode of violence happened during quarantine, physical violence happened for the first time, when it has not happened before; increasing levels of economic violence; use of weapons during violence, etc. Moreover, a number of factors contribute to violence, including critical financial situation, unemployment, exacerbation of mental disorders, alcoholism, drug addiction, greater vulnerability of the victim, who has nowhere to go, inability to take children to school in order to work and maintain economic independence from the offender, closed public transport, etc. Example:

### Questionnaire 33

*The respondent (retired person) reported being abused by her husband for many years. At the moment of the call she didn't apply for any help due to the lockdown.*

### Questionnaire 35

*The respondent reported being more frequently abused by her husband during the lockdown since her husband knew she had nowhere to go. She didn't look for help during the lockdown, since she was afraid of escalation of the situation.*

During the pandemic and quarantine restrictions, economic and sexual violence also increased. In particular, the victims described cases when offenders who did not work / lost their jobs due to quarantine, demanded money from them, turned off the water and heating in the apartment etc. Sexual violence has also taken on new forms, associated with an increased demand for pornographic products on the Internet:

### Questionnaire 176

*The respondent suffers from abuse from her husband for many years. The husband is addicted to alcohol and demonstrates aggression. Last two months he started to make videos of her without clothes. He threatens to disseminate them among her colleagues and on the Internet.*

Male respondents also suffered domestic violence during the lockdown. They often could not go to the police because they were afraid to be made fun of. Others acknowledged they needed shelter, but they knew shelters don't accommodate men. Therefore, they did not apply. The situations faced by men were different. For example, some of them:

### **Questionnaire 223**

*The respondent was abused by his alcohol-addicted wife. He has a disability and needs assistance. He is completely disappointed in state assistance, feels lonely and needs help.*

### **Questionnaire 240**

*The respondent lives with his family in one house with his father who is over 70 years old. Being under the influence of alcohol his father kicked him out of the house together with his son, and called the police. The police came, noticed the father was drunk, started to threaten and didn't try to communicate. They didn't help to enter the house, nor they referred them to the shelter. The statement was not accepted by the police.*

Also 14 respondents (5%) said they noticed worse responding to domestic violence by authorized subjects during the lockdown. For instance:

### **Questionnaire 19**

*The respondent reported that the police don't come to all calls. She was also sure that courts were closed during the lockdown.*

### **Questionnaire 53**

*According to the respondent, during the lockdown personal visit to certain institutions became impossible, and it takes a lot of time for police to arrive.*

### **Questionnaire 65**

*A woman suffering from domestic violence from her ex-partner called the hotline. The man threatens to kill her whole family, her children, her mother and her, constantly threatens with physical violence, humiliates her. The woman, as the owner of the apartment, kicked him out, but the man continues to threaten her. The woman called the police at 102. However, the patrol police asked the woman to let the man warm up in the apartment, drink hot tea, and only then she should call the police to resolve the issue. The woman was stunned, and the man, when he saw that the police were holding his side, on the contrary, was impudent and began to behave even more aggressively. The woman called a police district officer, who came and also told her that they could not take him yet, so let him stay with her for the time being, and it was okay for the man to threaten her with physical violence and death.*

### **Questionnaire 78**

*In respondent's opinion, many state institutions work remotely during quarantine. Hence, it takes more time for cases to be considered, and no one knows what could happen for this time.*

### **Questionnaire 108**

*The respondent mentioned that due to the lockdown the police officers do not fulfil their obligations, for example by justifying their inaction by the disease of the district police officer.*

### **Questionnaire 172**

*The respondent informed that it takes time for the police to arrive. Police officers also misinformed the respondent that the district police officer was absent due to the lockdown.*

### **Questionnaire 257**

*The respondent said that she could not call the corresponding services, since her husband was home almost all the time, and was asking whom she was calling.*

When asked, how to strengthen the response of state authorities to the situation of domestic violence, as well as to improve the quality of services provided to victims of domestic violence, respondents suggested:

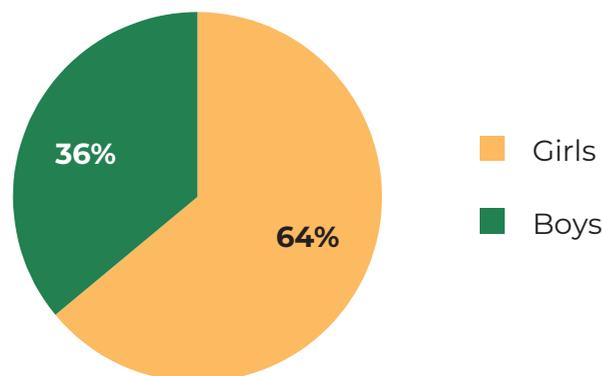
- police should better inform the victims about their rights and available services;
- more actively work with offenders (psychological counselling, addictions treatment);
- fight stereotypes about domestic violence (that men can't suffer from such violence, for example);
- police officers should take the victims and their situation more seriously, and not side with the offender;
- quickly respond to the situations of domestic violence;
- strengthen the protection of victims, particularly, through arrests, emergency barring orders even in the cases, when the offender left the place of the event before the police arrived;
- improve the training for specialists who provide psychological assistance to victims;
- increase the number of places and improve access to the shelters for victims of domestic violence (particularly, by allowing them to stay in the shelters with children of different ages and pets etc.).

## 4.2. Analysis of the results of the survey on the National Hotline for Children and Youth

The National Hotline for Children and Youth conducted a survey to find out the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation of domestic violence against children and to determine the effectiveness of the response of public authorities, general and specialized services (including police, courts, social services, shelters and medical institutions) in cases of domestic violence against children. The survey was conducted among adults who contacted the Hotline about cases of domestic violence against children.

A total of 133 people took part in the survey. 92% of respondents are women, 8% are men. The vast majority of the respondents were mothers / fathers - 92 people (69.2%), grandparents - 24 people (18%), aunts / uncles - 6 people (4.5%), sisters / brothers - 5 people (3.8%). Three respondents (2.3%) stated that they were the child's stepfather or a civilian husband / partner of the child's mother, and three more were acquaintances of the child. Almost two-thirds of the complaints concerned girls (64%), and only one-third (36%) - boys. Regarding the special status of the child, the largest number of respondents reported that the affected children are brought up in low-income families (27 respondents), families with many children (11 respondents), families of internally displaced persons (9 respondents). Five respondents reported that the child victim was a half-orphan / orphan / child deprived of parental care. In three cases the child had the status of a child with a disability, in another two the child lived in the family of a combatant or war veteran.

Breakdown of children-victims by sex

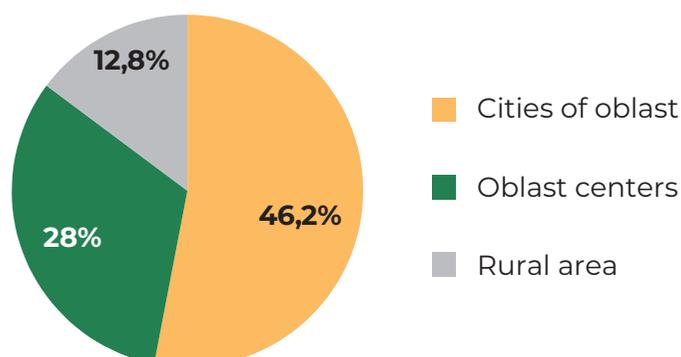


As to the geography of the survey, it covered respondents from almost all oblasts of Ukraine, except for the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Also, no calls were recorded from Luhansk oblast (territory controlled by Ukraine). The biggest number of calls came from Dnipropetrovsk oblast (14 calls), Kyiv oblast (13 calls), Kyiv (12 calls), Lviv (12 calls), and Odessa oblast (10 calls).

Majority of respondents called from the cities of the oblast (46.2%) and regional centres (28%). 12.9% of respondents indicated that they live in a village or settlement.

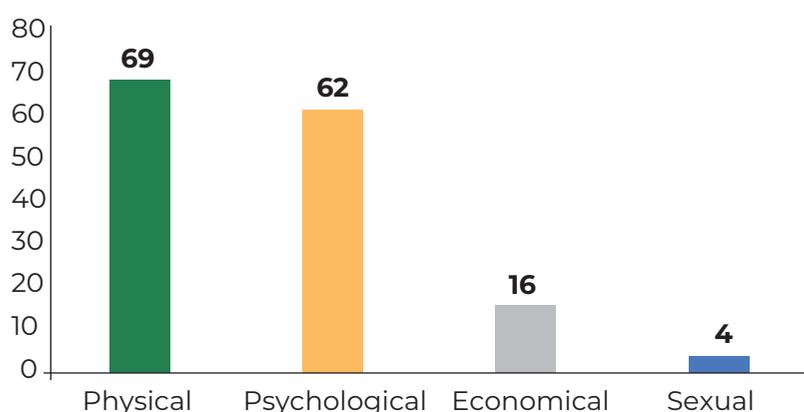
Apart from purely demographic reasons<sup>11</sup>, the low level of identification of violence against children and / or the willingness to report such violence in rural areas may also explain this ratio, namely the rather low rate of respondents living in rural areas.

### Breakdown by place of residence



Most respondents named the following types of violence children suffer from: physical violence (69 respondents or 51.9%) and psychological violence (62 respondents or 46.6%). 16 respondents (12%) reported economic violence against a child, and 4 respondents (3%) reported sexual violence.

### Breakdown by forms of violence



According to the research, the most common form of domestic violence is psychological. Although it could happen on its own, it often accompanies other forms of violence and is therefore more common. This trend, in particular, was observed at the National Hotline for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination, where in 93.7% of cases respondents reported psychological violence against them and only 71.6% - physical, 45.5% - economic and 3.6% - sexual violence. Therefore, the fact that the majority of respondents to the National Hotline for Children and Youth reported physical rather than psychological violence against a child leads to certain conclusions. The first is the inability to properly identify

<sup>11</sup> According to the State Statistics Service, the share of the rural population of Ukraine on January 1, 2020 was only about 30%. URL: [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2020/zb/05/zb\\_chuselnist%202019.pdf](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2020/zb/05/zb_chuselnist%202019.pdf)

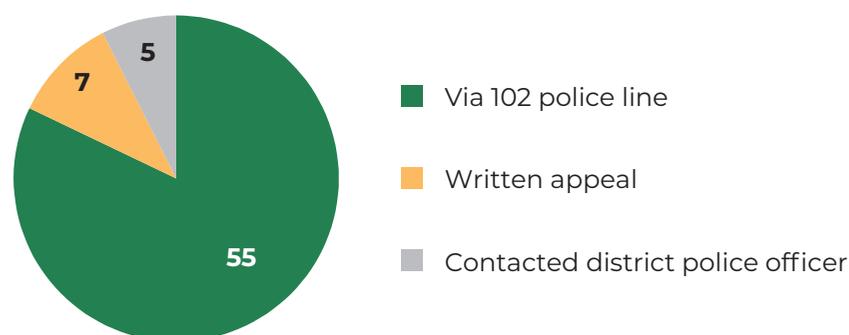
psychological abuse of a child. For example, a child may not be considered a victim of violence if he or she has only witnessed parental violence. Alternatively, parents or other relatives may not properly assess the child's psychological abuse, if any. As a result, violence against a child is identified when its consequences are physical. Moreover, if we compare the number of reports of economic violence (45.5%) at the National Hotline for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination with the results of this survey, the discrepancy of almost 4 times may also indicate insufficient identification of economic violence against children.

Another fact that indicates the lack of identification of domestic violence against children is that during the survey on the National Hotline for Children and Youth it was planned to interview at least 150 respondents, but as a result only 133 people agreed to participate. The difference is particularly noticeable in comparison with the survey on violence against adults, which was conducted on the National Hotline for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and where the planned number of respondents (300 people) was quickly interviewed. Thus, while adult victims are better able to identify and talk about violence against themselves, violence against children continues to be a latent phenomenon, with particularly negative consequences during crises such as the coronavirus pandemic.

## POLICE

67 respondents (50%) of 133 reported that they had informed the police about the fact of domestic violence against a child since the introduction of quarantine measures in Ukraine (March 12, 2020). 55 people called 102, 7 people submitted a written statement, and the remaining 5 contacted a district police officer.

Breakdown by the type of the police report



Among those who did not contact the police about child abuse, 28 respondents said they did not do so because they feared the complication of the situation with the offender, 25 - did not contact because they did not trust the police. Two other respondents reported that they had contacted the police, but only about violence against an adult. Though the child was directly abused or witnessed the violence, they did not report it to the police.

It should also be noted that usually the child is not the only one who is being abused. One of the parents often suffers from domestic violence as well. In such situations, the abused parent is not always able to act in the best interests of the child, in particular because of the fear of the offender and other reasons. Hence he or she is not able to act on his/her own behalf and at the same time as the child's legal representative and report violence to the police. The abusing parent, who is also the legal representative, most probably will not report him/herself to the police. Thus, the child remains hostage to such a situation, unable to get adequate protection. Only half of the respondents on the Hotline did report the abuse to the police, which only proves how often these situations occur. Just to compare, 72.6% of adult victims surveyed by the National Hotline for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination reported domestic violence to the police.

### Questionnaire 108

*The respondent acknowledged that her husband beats her and her daughter, when his orders are not done. The daughter needs her space, but the father always tries to set his rules. Conflicts often arise between the father and the girl. The woman is afraid of her husband, so she never turned to the authorities for help. The daughter is scared because the father is very aggressive.*

43 out of 67 respondents (64.2%) who reported domestic violence against a child to the police said that the police responded to their report. Sixteen of these individuals reported that the police had accepted the statement and responded, namely, an administrative protocol had been compiled, criminal proceedings had been instituted or an emergency barring order had been issued. Another 24 respondents said that the police accepted the statement, but there was no further response. In two cases, the police came on call and held an explanatory talk (in both cases, the child's mother was the offender).

24 respondents reported that the police did not respond to reports of domestic violence against the child. 8 respondents stated that their statement was not accepted. 7 respondents indicated that the police did not arrive on call, 1 person stated that the police arrived on only one of the three calls. Two respondents stated that although the police had accepted their statement about domestic violence against adults, the statement did not state that children had also suffered or witnessed such violence. In another case, a mother and her 15 years old son were abused. Upon the arrival of the police, the mother decided not to write a statement. Although the son expressed a desire to write a statement, the police denied this and explained it as him being not big enough.

Only 21 (31.3%) of the 67 respondents, who reported domestic violence, said the police asked whether the child had also been abused or witnessed violence. 44 respondents (65.7%) reported that the police did not ask them about it. Another 2 respondents (3%) complained that although they asked the police to register the child as an abused person in the administrative protocol, to recognize him as a victim in criminal proceedings or to issue an emergency barring order for the child, the police did not do so.

**Questionnaire 49**

*The respondent - grandmother to a child. She reported that her daughter had never said a word about being abused by her husband. In April 2020 her daughter called the respondent and cried that her husband had just beaten her. He blamed her for the fact that the family had lost their income, that nobody needed him, and his wife with the child were “mooches”. The respondent called the police immediately, however it took two hours for the police to arrive. The man had left by that time. They did make protocol, but they did not mention the child in it, and never made any further actions. Both her granddaughter, and her daughter came to live with her, and stayed there for the moment of the call.*

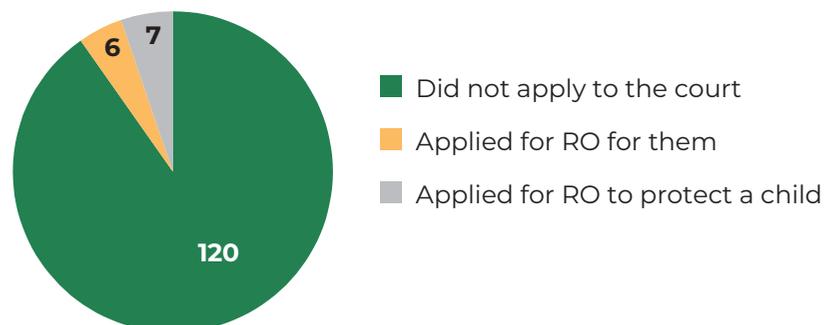
Also in some cases, respondents noted that the police accept complaints of domestic violence against a child, but do not notify the child services of such cases as required by the law<sup>12</sup>.

**COURTS**

Among 133 respondents, since the introduction of quarantine measures, only 6 (4.5%) applied to the court for a restraining order, which covered all or at least some measures concerning a child. Another 7 people (5.3%) stated that they had applied for a restraining order due to violence against an adult, but did not ask for measures to protect a child, although the child was directly affected by or witnessed the violence.

120 respondents (90.2%) reported that they did not apply for a restraining order at all. Respondents found different justifications for this. In particular, 69 people stated that they did not see the need for this, 23 did not know about such a protection mechanism, 12 did not believe that the court would make a positive decision, 2 - due to limited access to courts during quarantine measures. One respondent reported that she feared the situation with the offender would escalate if she went to court. In another case, the respondent, mother to the abused child, stated that she could not go to the city to go to court due to financial reasons.

**Breakdown by application for restraining order to the court**



<sup>12</sup> p. 4, item 36 of the Procedure for interaction of subjects implementing measures in the field of prevention and counteraction to domestic violence and gender-based violence, approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of August 22, 2018 № 658

The survey identified at least four cases when a child wished to go to court to obtain a restraining order on his or her own when his or her legal representatives were unable or unwilling to act on his or her behalf, but could not do so due to limited civil procedural capacity. In three cases, adult respondents stated that they could not go to court because they were not legal representatives. In one of these cases, the child's grandmother called the hotline, and in two others, neighbours / acquaintances of the family.

In this situation, it should be noted that, according to Art. 350-2 of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) of Ukraine and Art. 26 of the Law of Ukraine «On Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence», in case of domestic violence against a child, parents or other legal representatives of the child, relatives of the child (grandmother, grandfather, adult brother, sister), stepmother or stepfather of the child as well as the guardianship authority, but not a child him/herself, may apply to the court for a restraining order,.. Therefore, the opportunities for a child victim of domestic violence are quite limited, especially in circumstances where his or her legal representatives or other relatives are the offenders or for some reason do not want to take appropriate special protection against domestic violence. This seems to be a rather unfair and discriminatory provision, especially when the child is a minor, i.e. he/she is between 14 and 18 years old. After all, in accordance with the general provisions of Art. 47 of the CPC, "minors between the ages of fourteen and eighteen may personally exercise civil procedural rights and perform their duties in court in cases arising from the relationship in which they personally participate, unless otherwise provided by the law. In such cases the court may choose to involve the legal representative of a minor or a person whose civil capacity is limited». In other words, compared to other categories of civil cases, minors have fewer opportunities to exercise their rights in cases of domestic violence. And this despite the fact that the last category of cases is aimed at protecting such priority rights as the right to life, health, physical and psychological integrity of the person.

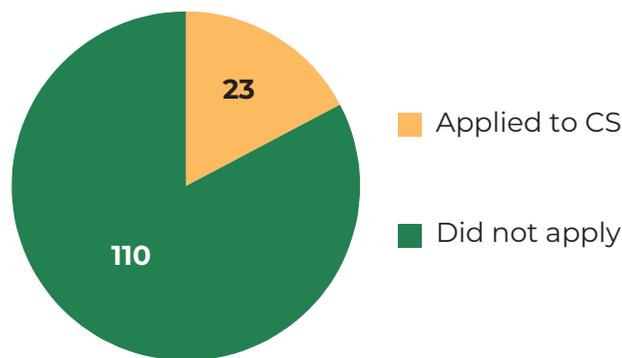
Moreover, the analysis of the answers of the respondents show that many of them (23 people or 19.2% of those who did not apply for a restraining order) are unaware of the possibility of obtaining a restraining order or that such a document can be obtained to protect a child. Also, a significant percentage of those who said they did not see the need for a restraining order (69 people or 57.5% of those who did not apply for a restraining order) might indicate an inability to properly identify violence against a child or the severity of its impact on a child, unwillingness or inability to be guided by the interests of the child in relations with the offender, insufficient awareness of the phenomenon of domestic violence and its consequences for children, etc.

Three of the six persons who applied for a restraining order to protect the child stated that their application had been considered within 72 hours, as required by the law. One respondent stated that the consideration of the application lasted 4 days, another - that the court hearing was scheduled 17 days after the submission of the application. Three respondents noted that the filing and consideration of the application by the court took place remotely, another person reported that the hearing of the case on the issuance of a restraining order took place in the courtroom in the presence of the parties.

## CHILD SERVICES

Only 23 respondents (17.3%) confirmed they reported the violence against a child to child services, 110 (82.7%) did not report.

Breakdown by report to child services (CS)



Explaining the reasons why they did not contact the child services, 68 respondents stated that they did not know about them, 29 - did not wish to contact them, 3 - wanted to apply, but the services did not work during the quarantine. In three cases, respondents stated that they did not apply because they did not trust the relevant services, in particular, they were afraid that children would be taken away from them instead of help.

Among 23 respondents who applied to child services, 1 respondent (4.3%) stated that he received comprehensive services at the premises of the child service / CSSFCY, 2 respondents (8.7%) received comprehensive services online, 6 respondents (26%) received services in part, 14 respondents (61%) did not receive the services they needed.

Among the main complaints are the attempts of specialists of the relevant services to reconcile the parents of children, between whom there was a situation of violence, the ineffectiveness of the measures taken, the lack of specialists, including a psychologist. In at least 6 cases, it was reported that the services refused to respond to the application.

### Questionnaire 33

*The respondent noted that the child services of one of the hromadas promised to hold a preventive talk with the offender. However, shelter was not offered, and the right to social services was not explained.*

### Questionnaire 48

*The respondent reported that the child services specialist, instead of offering help, suggested the parents to reconcile.*

### Questionnaire 50

*The respondent said that after the divorce the father demanded to see the children. If she does not agree, the father takes the children by force. The child services informed the mother that she had to find a child psychologist and get an opinion of the psychologist on the condition of the children, because the social services work only with families in which mom and dad live together. According to the respondent, the specialists of the child services did not explain to her that the parent living separately from the child has a right to communicate with*

and participate in the life of the children, if such communication and participation do not harm the child's development.

**Questionnaire 51**

The respondent reported that she was refused assistance to her and her child, since the child wasn't beaten. Hence, according to child services, no violence occurred.

**Questionnaire 118**

The respondent reported that after she divorced her husband, the custody authorities issued a decision stating that the father had the right to spend one day a week with his 5-year-old son. However, after the son meets the father, the boy becomes closed and bruises appear on the child's body. The mother was concerned about the situation and asked the custody authorities for help, but was denied. Experts of the custody authorities stressed that if a woman continues to file such reports, she will have to pay a fine.

Lockdown restrictions also lead to certain challenges. For instance:

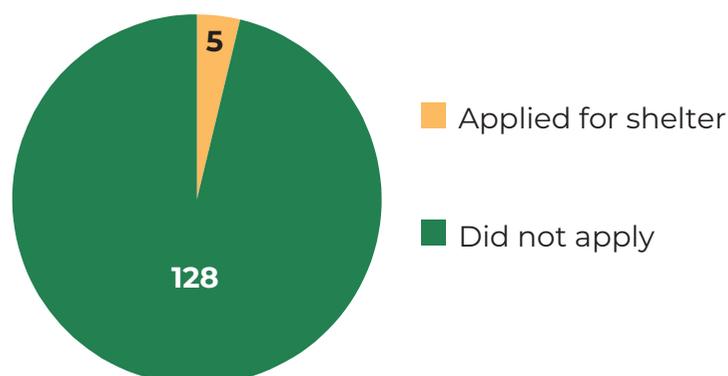
**Questionnaire 6**

A woman was told that a representatives from child services couldn't come because of the lockdown. She should wait until the lockdown ends.

**SHELTERS**

Among 133 respondents, only 5 (3.8%) applied to shelters since the introduction of quarantine measures. Four of them were placed in the shelter with the child. One respondent who, along with a minor child, was physically abused by her husband was denied shelter with the abused child because there was no referral from the police. Another six respondents, who reported not applying to the shelters, said they did not do so because they had not received a referral from the services authorized to provide them. This obstacle is in fact a purely procedural one and can be removed by establishing more effective cooperation between actors involved in preventing and combating domestic violence. However, in practice it closes access to shelters to persons in need of such services and, in particular, to affected children.

**Breakdown by application to the shelter**



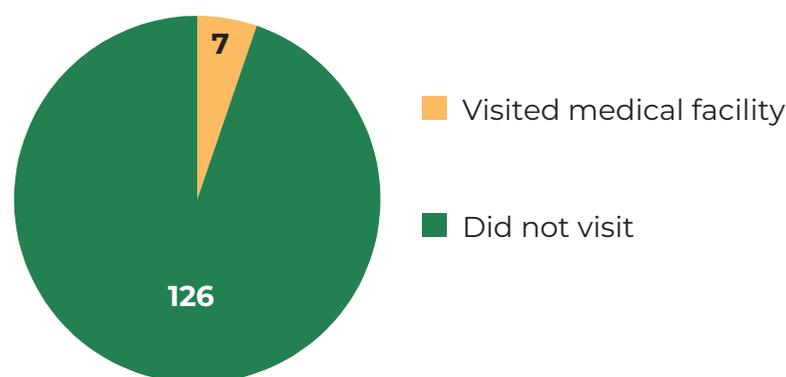
Also, at least 8 people stated that they did not apply to the shelters because they did not know about their existence or that they could use such a service. Although this is a relatively small percentage of the total number of respondents (6%), it indicates the need to raise awareness among the population about the services that can be provided to victims of domestic violence, especially children.

In at least two cases, children who were abused by their parents needed shelter and would like to apply there on their own, but were not able to do so, as the law provides for the right to shelter for children affected by domestic violence only with their mother / parent or care-giver, which was impossible in their situation<sup>13</sup>. It seems that this approach of the legislator perpetuates the stereotype that domestic violence is committed only against one of the parents, and that violence against a child is a derivative of such violence. And it is this parent who must take care of himself and the child, turning to the shelter. A situation where the child is abused by both parents, or where the parent who is himself or herself the victim of violence is unable or unwilling to protect the child, unfortunately are not reflected in the current legislation. The law does not also include appropriate mechanisms to protect the child from domestic violence in such situations.

### MEDICAL FACILITIES

Only 7 people (5.3%) out of 133 respondents reported that they went for medical help for the abused child. Four of them said they went to the hospital because the child needed medical attention due to the violence. One respondent applied to a medical institution to receive the certificate about physical injuries sustained by a child as a result of domestic violence.

Breakdown by visits to medical facilities



Among those who did not seek medical attention, 110 respondents (87.3%) said they did not do so because the child did not need medical care in relation to abuse. Although situations vary and an abused child may not really need medical attention, such a high proportion of callers who report this is alarming, and may indicate

<sup>13</sup> P 19 of the Standard Regulations on Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence and /or Gender-Based Violence, approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of August 22, 2018 N° 655

that parents / guardians are not always able to properly assess whether a suffered child needs medical attention. In particular, many respondents noted significant deterioration in the psycho-emotional state of the child due to the situation of violence. There may also be other reasons why respondents did not consider it necessary to seek medical care for the suffered child, including unwillingness to disclose violence against the child, fear to lose the child, threats from the offender, etc.

The coronavirus pandemic has also affected parents' willingness to seek medical help for children. For example, two respondents said that they did not go to medical facilities because they feared that they or a child could become infected with COVID-19 while waiting in line at the hospital. Three respondents said that they did not apply, because during the quarantine it was recommended to go to hospitals only in urgent cases and they did not consider domestic violence against a child as such a case.

### **How has the situation with domestic violence against children changed during quarantine?**

In general, the majority of the respondents noted that the situation with domestic violence against children has worsened since the introduction of quarantine measures. In many cases, violence became more frequent, and respondents also complained that it was during lockdown when the child was abused for the first time. Factors that contributed to this were most often the loss of a job by one or both parents, as well as the forced transition of children to distance learning. Children had to stay at home and were isolated from society and peers.

#### **Questionnaire 40**

*The respondent reported that her grandson was studying via his computer during quarantine. His father also had to work on this computer. When the boy did not have time to do his homework before his father needed a computer, the latter became very angry. He once severely beat a child for being late for a meeting. The respondent complained that in the ordinary family where her grandson lives, there are no funds to buy equipment and computers. The family lives in a one-room apartment, it is very crowded and there is not enough space for all family members to work and study.*

Another respondent reported a case when in response to the escalation of violence against her son by his father during quarantine, the son himself became violent towards his parents:

#### **Questionnaire 14**

*The respondent reported that the quarantine worsened the situation with violence by her son's father. Teaching a child online was difficult. Now the son does not consider the father an authority and does everything to his detriment, and also becomes violent towards his parents.*

Some respondents complained about the work of state agencies online, which did not allow appropriate and effective assistance.

Among suggestions on how to improve the work of the state agencies and assistance to child victims of domestic violence, the respondents named the following:

- strengthen the mechanism for identification of child victims of violence (particularly, children who witnessed violence, according to the law, are also victims of domestic violence);
- improve police and child services response to the cases of domestic violence against children;
- improve quality of court services in cases of domestic violence;
- better informing about the mechanisms to protect and support child victims of domestic violence;
- more attention to be paid to the needs and requests of the child victims etc.

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<sup>15</sup> Art. 1(1)(2) of the Law of Ukraine “On prevention and counteraction to domestic violence”

## 5. Experience of other countries in preventing and countering domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic

In preparation for this report, “La Strada-Ukraine”, in collaboration with partner organizations from Bulgaria, Moldova and Belarus<sup>15</sup>, and in collaboration with the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, conducted a series of online discussions involving government officials and civil society organizations from the abovementioned countries and Ukraine. Discussions took place from February to May 2021. Each of them highlighted the experience of each country in assessing the overall situation with domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the operation of hotlines consulting victims of domestic violence, as well as the specifics of response of state authorities. Representatives of the authorized subjects responsible for the implementation of measures in the field of prevention and counteraction to domestic violence and, in particular, such state agencies as the Ministry of Social Policy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Police, the National Social Service, the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Coordination Centre for Free Legal Aid and others, took part in these discussions.

Here the report should focus in more detail on the main trends and best practices in responding to domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Moldova, Bulgaria and Belarus.

Quarantine restrictions in Moldova were introduced in mid-March 2020. According to the manager of the Women and Girls' Trust Line (Moldova), immediately after that the number of reports about domestic violence decreased. However, soon the number of reports increased significantly, which corresponds to the picture recorded in other countries, including Ukraine. Women have become more likely to report psychological violence, as well as to complain that they feel guilty because they cannot protect not only themselves but also their children. Victims began to seek less help from public authorities (the number of appeals fell from 54% to 13%). After the introduction of quarantine restrictions, the victim support services suspended their activities, did not accept new victims etc. The shelters did not create conditions for the victims to comply with recommendations for self-isolation. The courts delayed resolving issuing restraining orders (instead of 30 days, such cases lasted up to a year). Multidisciplinary commissions dealing with the protection of children's rights, due to the need for the presence of specialists of various profiles (representative of the local administration, family doctor, social worker, etc.) also could not properly perform their functions. Therefore, the meetings were either held online, which, given the sensitivity of the issue, was not very effective, or were convened only after several episodes of violence. The response of law enforcement agencies was also not always effective.

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<sup>15</sup> The partner organization from Moldova was «La Strada-Moldova», from Bulgaria - «Animus Association», from Belarus – «La Strada Belarus».

Seeing these systemic problems, Moldovan NGOs, and in particular “La Strada-Moldova”, conducted research<sup>16</sup> on the needs of domestic violence victims, as well as on the response of law enforcement agencies in the context of COVID-19. The results of these studies were presented and discussed with law enforcement agencies, thanks to which it was possible to draw the attention of the relevant authorities to the existing problems.

Moldovan law enforcement officials, who were also present at the online discussion, said that since the introduction of quarantine restrictions, a number of measures have been taken to adapt the mechanism of police response to domestic violence in Moldova. Among the general measures were issuing orders requiring police officers to observe anti-epidemic security measures during the response, citizens' appeals were received online, except when a person's personal presence was required, and informational work was carried out with citizens, including the use of megaphones on police cars.

Due to the challenges in responding to domestic violence caused by quarantine restrictions, further special actions had also to be taken in Moldova. For example, police used their police vehicles to transport victims of domestic violence for forensic examinations when public transport was closed. It was difficult to monitor compliance with the protective orders, as the offender and the victim stayed in one house. So the police had to call or contact them online. The last practice of adapting to the conditions of the pandemic was later incorporated into the legislation, when on January 3, 2021, legislative changes were made regarding the implementation of electronic monitoring of compliance with the terms of the protection order through the use of electronic bracelets.

The coordinators of the Helpline for Survivors of Violence(Bulgaria) noted an increased number of cases of domestic violence in Bulgaria during the pandemic. At the same time, there were difficulties in adapting the work of victims support services. For example, negative PCR-tests were required for victims to be placed in shelters, which victims often could not afford; shelters could not always provide isolated facilities in which victims could be in self-isolation or waiting for PCR results etc. As a positive change introduced during the quarantine restrictions in Bulgaria, can be mentioned the introduction of the practice to place victims in a shelter at the place of the application, not only at the place of registration, as it was before. Also during the pandemic, some NGOs in Bulgaria helped shelters by providing accommodation for victims during the period of self-isolation. Moldovan NGOs also practiced the same.

The situation with domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was specific in Belarus, as no quarantine restrictions or lockdowns have been officially launched in the country since the beginning of the pandemic, and public sector enterprises, institutions and organizations have not switched to remote work. Although the private business sometimes practiced working from home for their employees. Due to such circumstances, the impact of the pandemic on the domestic violence situation was difficult to track. Thus, according to the manager of the National Hotline for Victims of Domestic Violence (Belarus), probably this was the reason there was no increase in the number of calls to the hotline during the pandemic. At the same time, such an impact could still be traced by analysing the circumstances of individual appeals. For example, due to the illness of family members (most often the offender), the victims postponed the resolution of the

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<sup>16</sup> [http://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Studiu%20Raspunsul\\_organelor\\_de\\_drept\\_ENG.pdf](http://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Studiu%20Raspunsul_organelor_de_drept_ENG.pdf)

domestic violence situation until their recovery. Other victims decided not to seek help from government agencies for fear of being infected with COVID-19. Some clients complained about the worsening situation with domestic violence when offenders switched to working from home. In one case the situation with domestic violence was exacerbated due to the fact that in the spring of 2020 the authorities stopped issuing referrals to medical and correction centres, thus the offender had to stay at home. In the absence of systematic research and data collection in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence at the national level and, in particular, during the pandemic, it is quite difficult to talk about systemic problems in Belarus. Although the isolated cases mentioned above indicate that even without lockdown in the country, such an impact could not be avoided. Therefore, the situation in other countries, as well as in Ukraine, shows that not only the lockdown exacerbates the situation with domestic violence. Other crises, regardless of their specific nature, and response measures taken by the authorities, may negatively impact the situation as well.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the results of surveys on the National Hotline for Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and the National Hotline for Children and Youth, the conclusions of online discussions with representatives of public authorities and civil society in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and Belarus, and current legal framework in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence, in particular the regulations adopted after the introduction of quarantine restrictions in Ukraine, a number of recommendations for public authorities and, in particular, subjects implementing measures to prevent and combat domestic violence and gender-based violence, were developed. These recommendations can be used to improve the response to domestic violence in Ukraine in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in other crises and emergencies.

The recommendations are based on such legal acts as the Laws of Ukraine «On Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence», «On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men», the Decree of the President of Ukraine «On Immediate Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection of the Rights of Victims of such Violence», the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection of the Rights of Victims of such Violence, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from April 21, 2021 № 361-r, State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence till 2025, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on February 24, 2021 № 145 and other regulations in the field of prevention and counteraction to domestic violence and gender-based violence.

### To the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine:

**1. Develop and implement in the work of the subjects, who are responsible for taking measures in the field of prevention and counteraction to domestic and gender-based violence, algorithms for their actions in critical situations to improve their cooperation.** The existing mechanism of cooperation does not consider all specifics, risks and challenges that exist for victims in crises, and therefore it is necessary to develop a separate algorithm for action and interaction of authorized subjects in such an environment.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 5 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 1 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection of the Rights of Victims of such Violence.*

**2. Adapt the system of detection and provision of services to victims of domestic violence to the conditions of quarantine restrictions, in particular restrictions on transport, shifting of businesses, institutions, organizations to remote work, etc.**

It is not only about setting up and improving the online counselling system, but also about diversifying the services provided, taking into account the need to work in a changed environment. According to the results of the survey, not all services for victims of domestic violence due to their specifics can be provided qualitatively online (for example, consultations with a psychologist, especially during periods of escalation of domestic violence, when the victim is in a difficult emotional state). Also, not all categories of victims have adequate access to online services, in particular, people with lower income may have difficulties. Therefore, in crisis situations, it is necessary, aside from improving the system of online services, to provide alternative ways to access such services for victims.

*This recommendation is in line with task 9 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 3 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection of the Rights of Victims of such Violence.*

**3. Conduct information campaigns, training for representatives of subjects implementing measures to prevent and combat domestic and gender-based violence in order to improve the identification and response to domestic violence against children, in particular when children witness domestic violence.**

Data of the survey and analysis of statistics of investigations and criminal proceedings under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code, considered by the courts, showed that the number of identified cases of domestic violence against children is extremely low. Often, parents cannot identify violence in order to report it to the police and child services on behalf of the child. Or parents may be abusive or unwilling to report child abuse for other reasons. Number of domestic violence reports among rural residents is particularly low compared to urban residents. All these factors should be taken into account when carrying out preventive work and responding to cases of domestic violence against children by authorized entities.

*This recommendation is in line with task 7 (measures 2,3,4) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

**4. Develop guidelines for authorized subjects implementing measures to prevent and combat violence against children, concerning the specifics of their activities under quarantine restrictions and other crises (in particular, social service centres, child services, custody and care authorities).**

According to the surveys, often the services provided by these structures, from the respondent's perspective, were ineffective, especially in matters of protection of the interests of the child. In particular, quarantine restrictions made it impossible to take a multidisciplinary approach to solving the problem as well as involve family members (for example, hold a meeting of the Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child).

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 2 (Measure 5 in terms of providing methodological assistance to actors implementing measures to prevent and combat domestic and / or gender-based violence at the regional and local levels), Task 7 (Measure 7), Task 8 (Measure 4) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 6 (subitem 3) of the Plan of Immediate Measures for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection of the Rights of Victims of such Violence.*

**5. Amend civil procedural law to allow children over the age of 14 to lodge an application with the court on their own to obtain a restraining order in case of domestic or gender-based violence (as provided in the general procedure of Article 47 of the CPC).**

**6. Strengthen preventive work to detect and respond to violence on the Internet. Improve the legal framework in this area, in particular by establishing liability for gender-based crimes via the Internet (e.g. stalking).** According to the conducted surveys, the number of cases of domestic violence, sexual violence in particular, as well as gender-based violence, which is committed through the Internet, increased. Accordingly, there is a need for active identification of such cases, informing the public about new forms of domestic violence in the situation of pandemic, improving the legal framework etc.

*This recommendation is in line with item 16 of the Plan of Urgent Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims of Such Violence.*

**7. Collect gender-disaggregated statistics and investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the domestic violence situation in Ukraine.** During the preparation of this report, as well as during the online discussions, there was a lack of detailed statistics and research on the impact of the pandemic on the situation of domestic violence and especially on certain categories of victims, such as women, children, people with disabilities, low-income households etc. According to the results of the surveys, people from these categories most often contacted the hotlines, so it can be assumed that they were the most vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic.

*This recommendation is consistent with task 1 (Measures 2, 3) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 12 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Protection the Rights of Victims of such Violence.*

## 8. Establish cooperation with civil society organizations to respond more effectively to cases of domestic violence in crisis situations.

*This recommendation is in line with item 14 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims of Such Violence.*

## 9. Take into account the situation with the impact of the pandemic and lockdown in the development and adoption of legislation and policies in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence.

### To the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine:

**1. Implement a system of electronic channels to receive complaints and reports about domestic violence (text messages, online chats, etc.), which would be an alternative to calling 102 or submitting a personal statement to the department, and analyse their effectiveness.** Such a system is crucial in any critical situation, especially during lockdowns, curfews, etc., when the population is advised to stay at home and, accordingly, the victims, being constantly under the control of the offender, do not have the opportunity to use a telephone<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, it will take into account the needs of less mobile groups, as well as provide better opportunities for children whose parents abuse them and / or do not want to contact the police.

**2. Develop and implement a special enhanced police response mechanism to domestic violence in crises and emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on affected children. Make changes to the Procedure for Risk Assessment of Domestic Violence.** According to the analysis of the legislation on prevention and counteraction to domestic violence adopted during the quarantine restrictions, the context of the pandemic was not taken into account. However, the actual data obtained for more than a year of quarantine measures in Ukraine show a significant increase in cases of domestic violence. Furthermore, victims face increased risks due to the quarantine restrictions, namely - round-the-clock stay in the same house with the offender, challenges with accessing specialized support services, restrictions on movement, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to develop special instructions / guidelines that the police can follow in case of crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, including the revision and amendment of the Procedure for Assessing the Risks of Domestic Violence, taking into account possible crisis context.

<sup>17</sup> Similar recommendations have been repeatedly made at the international level. In particular, the importance of the introduction of alternative channels for reporting of domestic violence cases was mentioned in her address to the Member States of the European Union by the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality Evelyn Regner (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200406IPR76610/covid-19-stopping-the-rise-in-domestic-violence-during-lockdown>).

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 5 (Measure 10), Task 12 (Measure 2) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 15 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims of Such Violence.*

**3. Provide training for law enforcement officers on responding to domestic violence in crisis situations, with special attention to identifying affected children.** At such trainings, police officers should be explained the impact of crises and emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on the domestic violence situation, the increased risks faced by victims in such conditions, and the need to prioritize the safety of victims and the use of special measures to protect victims, including issuing emergency barring order, over the practical inconveniences that such measures may cause to the offender (for example, the need for an offender to look for another temporary place of stay during lockdown or an increased risk of infection if he temporarily leaves the place of residence, etc.).

*This recommendation is in line with Task 7 (Measures 1-4) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

**4. Improve public awareness of the possibility to use protection mechanisms against domestic violence, such as a restraining order, and especially that such an order can also be obtained to protect a child.**

*This recommendation is in line with Task 2 (Measures 1-4), Task 8 (Measure 1), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

### To the Ministry for Social Policy of Ukraine:

**1. Develop and implement algorithms for detecting cases of domestic violence and providing services to victims under severe quarantine restrictions.** According to the results of the surveys, in different administrative-territorial units the centres of social services / child services organized their services differently: online, in some cases services weren't provided due to closures, in other cases they worked as usual. This shows the need to develop, adopt and implement specific unified guidelines for relevant services to respond to domestic violence and provide assistance to victims during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

*This recommendation is in line with Task 5, Task 11 (Measure 2) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

**2. Amend the Procedure for Interaction of Subjects Implementing Measures on Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence with regards to the domestic violence response by authorised subjects in critical situations.**

*This recommendation is consistent with the Task 5 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 1 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

**3. Inform the public about the services provided by the relevant institutions, assess the needs of the victims, especially the affected children, in the relevant services and, if necessary, refer them to general and specialized support services, including shelters.** It is these failures in the work of the relevant institutions that respondents most often complained about in the surveys, and therefore work in these areas should be carried out more actively.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 2 (Measures 3,4), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Item 13 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims of such Violence.*

**4. Analyse the availability of the staff at the centres of social services and child services, pay special attention to the availability in hromadas of social workers, psychologists, specialists in identifying persons / families in difficult life circumstances, in preventing domestic and / or gender-based violence and providing support to the victims.** The growing demand for such specialists due to the growing number of cases of domestic violence in crisis situations should be taken into account and, if necessary, additional specialists should be involved in such work during this period.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 5 (Measure 8) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Item 2 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

**5. Optimize activities and develop guidelines for call centres and hotlines on prevention and combatting domestic violence, taking into account the challenges posed by the pandemic.** For example, according to the information provided by the representative of the Hotline for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Children (1547), the number of anonymous calls increased significantly during the pandemic. This factor must be taken into account by the

relevant hotlines when planning activities, developing special operating procedures, compiling an algorithm of actions to be used in quarantine restrictions or in other crisis situations.

*This recommendation is in line with Task 11 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

### **6. Conduct training for the staff of the centres of social services / child services on the identification of children victims of domestic violence and the provision of appropriate services, in particular in the conditions of quarantine restrictions.**

The surveys revealed several cases when employees of the relevant services, being insufficiently aware of the phenomenon of domestic violence, could not identify child victims of violence, tried to reconcile parents, one of whom was the offender, refused to go on call during quarantine etc. All this indicates the need for training and awareness raising of the employees of these services.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 7, Task 8 (Measure 4) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Item 2 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

### **7. Increase public awareness of forms and manifestations of violence against children, children's rights and available services that they can use in the situation of domestic violence, in particular during quarantine restrictions.**

The interviews revealed a lack of awareness among parents, guardians, and other caregivers about the phenomenon, forms of domestic violence, the child's rights to protection, available services etc. Because of this, even when one of the parents of the abused child turned for assistance, the child was not mentioned as a victim. In some cases, the relatives of the affected child were not sufficiently informed whether they could apply to the relevant authorities for protection of the rights of a child.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 2 (Measures 1-4), Task 8 (Measure 1), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Items 13, 14. of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

### **8. Adapt the work of shelters for victims of domestic and / or gender-based violence to the conditions of quarantine restrictions.**

In particular, there is a need for improvement of the procedure for access to shelters by providing free testing for coronavirus infection, allocating separate rooms for newly arrived victims in order to comply with the conditions of self-isolation, allocating more places, including places for male victims, accommodation of victims in the shelters at the place of application not registration, etc.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 8 (Measures 2,3), Tasks 9, 10 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

**9. Ensure access to shelters for all victims of domestic and / or gender-based violence, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and other low-mobility groups, in crisis situations.** In case of public transport restrictions due to lockdown, victims should be provided with the necessary transport so that they can get to the shelter.

*This recommendation is in line with Task 10 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

**10. Raise public awareness of the possibility to gain protection against domestic violence, such as getting a restraining order, and especially that such an order can also be obtained to protect a child.**

*This recommendation is in line with Task 2 (Measures 1-4), Task 8 (Measure 1), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

## To the judicial authorities:

**1. Optimize the work of the judiciary in dealing with domestic violence cases, in particular when considering applications for restraining orders, especially under lockdown.** It should be borne in mind that, unlike other categories of cases, the term of consideration of this category of applications is shortened (the application must be considered by the court within 72 hours), due to the existence of potential danger to life and health of victims while they remain in the same room with the offender and the offender has free access to them. Therefore, for this category of cases it is necessary to provide additional opportunities to ensure access to courts during crisis situations, both by improving the system of electronic justice and providing better physical access to court. The latter may be done, in particular, by prioritizing the consideration of such cases in court (at the request of the applicant), urgent registration and consideration of applications for the issuance of a restraining order by the court (in particular, within 24 hours), if such applications were received by mail, etc.

**2. Improve public awareness of the possibility to gain protection against domestic violence, such as a restraining order, and especially that such an order can also be obtained to protect a child.**

*This recommendation is in line with Task 2 (Measures 1-4), Task 8 (Measure 1), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

### To the Ministry of Health of Ukraine:

**1. Ensure the introduction of a separate procedure for receiving of patients who are victims of domestic violence and providing them with medical care in the context of quarantine restrictions.** Although medical facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic are working hard to overcome the effects of the pandemic, the current legislation on domestic violence lists them among institutions that are responsible for implementing measures to prevent and combat domestic violence, and therefore medical facilities should ensure the implementation of appropriate functions. As the surveys found, victims themselves are often afraid to seek medical treatment during the period of the pandemic, and in some cases doctors refuse to respond to such calls. Therefore, a separate mechanism should be developed and implemented envisaging the provision of medical services to victims of domestic violence during the pandemic or other crisis situations. Victims should be informed of such a mechanism.

*This recommendation is in line with Task 12 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025*

**2. Raise awareness of the public about the negative impact of domestic violence on physical and psychological health of victims, especially if such violence is committed against children, and encourage the victims to apply for medical treatment if necessary, in particular during pandemic.** Surveys have found that victims often do not seek medical attention due to the lack of awareness of the health effects of domestic violence and the long-term possible consequences of such violence. This is especially noticeable in a pandemic, where the relevant physical injuries or psychological consequences of violence are not considered urgent enough. Therefore, the population needs to receive additional information in order to fight such stereotypes.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 2 (Measures 1-4), Task 8 (Measure 1), Task 13 (Measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Items 13, 14 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

## To the regional (oblast) and Kyiv city administrations:

**1. Take measures to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed quarantine restrictions on the population.** According to the surveys results, during the pandemic, the rate of economic violence increased significantly. Unemployment and the general deterioration of the economic situation were among the main factors contributing to the increase in domestic violence and its intensity. Although the economic impact of the pandemic has been felt not only in the field of domestic violence, this aspect should be taken into account when planning measures to prevent domestic violence during this period.

**2. Ensure quality and smooth operation of professionals who specialize in providing assistance in cases of domestic violence, including psychologists, especially during a pandemic or other crisis situation.** The growing demand for such specialists due to the increasing number of cases of domestic violence in crisis situations should be taken into account and, if necessary, additional specialists should be involved in such work during this period.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 5 (Measure 8) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Item 2 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

**3. Conduct trainings for the staff of the centres of social services / child services on the identification of children victims of domestic violence and the provision of appropriate services, in particular during the quarantine restrictions.** The interview revealed several cases when employees of the relevant services, being insufficiently aware of the phenomenon of domestic violence, could not identify child victims of violence, tried to reconcile parents, one of whom was the abuser, refused to go on call during quarantine etc. All this indicates the need for trainings and awareness raising for employees of these services.

*This recommendation is consistent with Task 7, Task 8 (Measure 4) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, Item 2 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

**4. Inform the public about the services provided by the relevant institutions, assess the needs of the victims, especially affected children, for the relevant services and, if necessary, refer them to general and specialized support services, including shelters.** These were some failures in the work of the relevant services that respondents most often complained about in the surveys. Therefore, these aspects need more attention.

*This recommendation is in line with task 2 (measures 3,4), task 13 (measure 1) of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025, item 13 of the Plan of Immediate Measures to Prevent and Counteract Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims such Violence.*

**5. Provide access to shelters for victims of domestic and/or gender-based violence in cases where the work of public transport was limited due to a lockdown.**

*This recommendation is in line with Task 10 of the State Social Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic and Gender-Based Violence until 2025.*

## 7. RECOMMENDED ALGORITHMS TO RESPOND TO CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING CRISIS, COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN PARTICULAR

### I. TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- 1) Assess the situation of violence, the existing or possible risks, especially for children.
- 2) Report the case to the “102” police line or visit the police office (if possible), or call the district police officer.
- 3) If the offender behaves aggressively and you feel there is a threat to your life or health, find a safe place while you are waiting for police, inform your relatives, friends, neighbours that you are in danger.
- 4) If a child was abused or witnessed the episode of abuse, report this to the “102” police line operator, and the police officers upon their arrival. It is important to inform the child that he/she has a right to call the police in case the child feels in danger.
- 5) After the police arrival ask them to assess risks and issue the emergency barring order based on this assessment. It should be borne in mind that quarantine restrictions have in no way affected the regulation of the domestic violence response. Therefore, the police cannot refuse to issue the emergency barring order, including the offender’s obligation to leave the victim’s place of residence in compliance with the order.
- 6) Ask the police to explain your rights and give information about the services you can use as a victim of domestic violence, including a child victim or a child who has witnessed violence.
- 7) If necessary, seek for medical help (call an ambulance, go to the hospital), psychological help (to centres of social services, mobile teams of social and psychological assistance, etc.), legal assistance (free legal aid offices), information consultations (Hotline on Combating Human Trafficking, Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Children (1547), National Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination (116 123 - from cells), shelters, other general and specialized support services for victims. If the victim of abuse is a child, please contact the child service at the place of residence.

- 8) If in critical situation (for instance, public transport is closed due to the lockdown) you cannot get to the most urgent services (e.g. shelter, hospital, child services etc.), you are entitled to ask respective services to provide you the transportation (call these facilities directly, or ask the police for assistance, as they are usually the first agency in the cooperation mechanism that victims contact).
- 9) In case after the police intervention, you still feel that the conflict escalates/ continues, apply for the restraining order to the court. In your court application you can ask for protection measures for adult victims and for the child (or for both).

## II. POLICE

- 1) Accept and register the statement (report) about domestic violence (received in personal communication, via “102” line, via electronic communication channels).
- 2) Send a police squad to the scene of the domestic violence.

Note: in the event of an imminent danger to the life or health of the victim, the police have the right to enter the person’s home even in the absence of a court decision.

- 3) Upon arrival on call, patrol police officers must:
  - interrogate the victim and witnesses of domestic violence (interviews of the victim and the offender are conducted in separate rooms);
  - if there are children at the scene, clarify if they have also been victims (including witnesses) of violence;
  - make a risk assessment (taking into account the conditions of the crisis situation, e.g. lockdown) and, if necessary, issue an emergency barring order against the offender, including therein measures to protect the abused child.
- 4) Assess whether a case of domestic violence shows signs of a crime.

If the offense does not contain signs of a crime, compile a protocol on an administrative offense under Article 173-2 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses. The protocol is compiled either at the scene of the offense or after the offender is taken to the police.

If the offense contains signs of a crime, within 24 hours ensure the entry of information in the Unified Register of Pre-trial Investigations and start a pre-trial investigation. If necessary (physical violence, sexual violence), the investigator should apply to the investigating judge as soon as possible for a forensic examination.

- 5) Inform the victim about:
  - rights and responsibilities of the victim;
  - social services available to the victim;
  - the possibility for the victim to demand from the offender compensation for material damage and damage caused to her/his physical and mental health;

- the possibility to get an emergency barring order against the offender;
  - the possibility of applying to the court for a restraining order, in particular to protect the child;
  - the right for free legal aid.
- 6) If a child has been the victim of domestic violence, or the child has witnessed domestic violence, or the victim of the domestic violence has a child, or the child was the offender, inform the child service within 24 hours at the latest.
- 7) Organize the opportunity for the victim to access the needed support services.

If the victim requires medical attention, call an ambulance or (depending on the conditions of the crisis, e.g. the limitations in the work of public transport) take her/him to the hospital.

If the victim requires psychological help, refer him / her to a centre of social services, centre of social and psychological assistance, mother and child social centre, call a mobile brigade of social and psychological aid or offer to use the services of the Hotline on Combating Human Trafficking, Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Children (1547), the National Hotline for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination (116 123 - from cells), etc.

If the victim requires shelter, inform him / her about the location of such a facility or send him / her to the respective division at the local state administration or the executive body of the village, settlement, city council for family and children issues to receive a referral to the shelter. In case the public transport is closed due to the lockdown, transport the victim to the shelter.

If the victim requires legal assistance, send him / her to a free legal aid centre at the person's place of residence (to ensure the victim can exercise his / her right to free secondary legal aid, the police should provide her/him with the following documents: an extract from the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations containing information about the crime related to domestic violence, a coupon-notification of a crime related to domestic violence, a copy of an emergency barring order issued by a police officer).

If the victim requires social assistance, refer her/him to the centre of social services, centre of social and psychological assistance.

### III. COURTS

- 1) Consider the application for the issuance of a restraining order within the period prescribed by law (up to 72 hours).
- 2) Take into account the context of the crisis situation when determining the order of assignment of cases on domestic violence for consideration (for example, first of all consider applications sent by the applicant by mail, in particular because the court was closed or public transport was restricted, etc.).

- 3) Making a decision on the issuance / extension of a restraining order, take into account the context of the crisis situation and the circumstances of the impact of such a situation on a particular applicant, offender, family situation, etc., when you assess risks.
- 4) In case a copy of the decision on the restraining order cannot be given to the applicant personally, inform the applicant of your decision as soon as possible and send a copy. Also, as soon as possible (preferably on the same day) notify the authorized units of the National Police, as well as the respective district, district in Kyiv and Sevastopol city state administrations and executive bodies of village, settlement, city, district councils in the cities of residence (stay) of the applicant.

## IV. CENTRES OF SOCIAL SERVICES

- 1) Accept and register the application about domestic violence.
- 2) Inform the police about the case (with victim's consent).  
If a victim came with the child, or the child is a victim, immediately inform the police and child services.
- 3) Inform the victim about her/his rights and services available.
- 4) Assess the needs of the victim (in social services, shelter, medical, psychological or legal assistance) and make referrals to respective services, facilities, and provide appropriate social services. In the critical situation of lockdown, there might be a need to organize transportation to the respective services.
- 5) If required, organize and coordinate taking by the victim of a victim support programme.
- 6) Provide the victims, depending on their needs, the following social services:
  - social supervision;
  - counselling;
  - social prevention;
  - social integration and reintegration;
  - social adaptation;
  - crisis and emergency response;
  - representation of interests.

## V. CHILD SERVICES

- 1) Accept and register the application about domestic violence.
- 2) Inform the child affected, his / her legal representatives (if they are not the child's abusers) about the rights and responsibilities, as well as about the measures and services available for the child.
- 3) In crisis situations organize a special regime of work of employees, if necessary, involving additional specialists etc. Even during the introduction of lockdowns, it is necessary to ensure the smooth implementation of the most urgent (for the protection of children's rights) functions, such as visiting children in difficult life circumstances, registered with the service. To do this, create special mobile groups, provide staff with special vehicles to perform such functions, ensure the work of a crisis psychologist in the service room to provide emergency psychological assistance to affected children etc.
- 4) If the child requires shelter, place the child accompanied by the mother / father (if they are not the child's abusers) in a shelter for victims of domestic violence. If the child is alone, i.e. unaccompanied by the mother / father, place him or her in a children's social and psychological rehabilitation centre or the child service shelter. Taking into account the conditions of the crisis situation, it may be necessary to ensure the transportation of the affected child to the appropriate services, as well as to ensure additional procedures (PCR testing for COVID-19, temporary accommodation in a separate room for isolation, etc.).
- 5) If necessary, carry out preventive work with parents to prevent domestic violence against children, in particular with the involvement of police.

## VI. SHELTERS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- 1) Provide the victim who has applied for the shelter with information about his / her rights and the assistance available.
- 2) If the victim does not have a passport, help to receive or restore it.
- 3) If the victims cannot get to the shelter (especially taking into account the conditions of the lockdown), organize transportation of the victim to the shelter.
- 4) If the person is legally entitled to shelter (e.g.. the victim is not intoxicated or does not have acute infectious / venereal / mental illness), ensure that the necessary additional shelter procedures are met. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such procedures may include the organization of PCR testing, placement in separate rooms in order to comply with the conditions of self-isolation etc.
- 5) Take the victim to the shelter. An adult is accepted on his / her application by referral from the police, the centre of social services, the mobile brigade of social and psychological assistance. The child is admitted to the shelter together with the mother / father.

- 6) If the mother / father or care-giver is referred to the shelter with the child, inform child services and the police.
- 7) Identify the employee responsible for organizing and providing assistance to the victim.
- 8) Make a plan of individual work with the victim based on the results of the needs assessment.
- 9) Provide the victim, depending on the needs, with the following types of assistance:
  - psychological services;
  - advice on the rights of victim, including the affected child, and the services available;
  - legal services and / or informing about the possibility to receive free legal aid;
  - conducting activities within social rehabilitation programs;
  - if necessary, ensuring the transportation of victims to places where they can receive the necessary services that are not provided in the shelter.

## VII. MEDICAL FACILITIES

- 1) In the situation of crisis, like COVID-19 pandemic, when medical facilities work in emergency mode, and there is a risk of infecting in the line, medical facilities should ensure possibility to see victims of domestic violence separately from other patients (specialised rooms, separate medical specialists, fixed visiting hours etc.).
- 2) In case of referral of the victim, in particular a child, from other authorized entities that implement measures to prevent and combat domestic violence for PCR testing, which determines the urgency of providing such a person with specialized services, appropriate testing should be carried out as a matter of priority.
- 3) The health care professional should record the complaints (appeals) of the victim of domestic violence, conduct a medical examination and document the results of the examination.
- 4) In the case of hospitalization of adult victims, the medical staff shall establish whether such persons have children and whether they are provided with proper care and residence for the period of hospitalization of the parents. If there are children who will be left without proper care / parental care after the hospitalization of the victim, the medical staff member shall immediately notify the responsible person of the health care institution for further information of the child services.

- 5) Medical worker of a health care facility, who has identified injuries in a patient that may have occurred as a result of domestic violence, shall submit all relevant documentation to the responsible person for further informing of the relevant authorities:
  - the responsible person informs the police within 24 hours about all the facts of the application and/or delivery to the healthcare facility of the persons with bodily injuries of criminal nature, including those related to domestic violence;
  - if the victim is a child, the responsible person informs the police and the child services within 24 hours.
- 6) The victim is informed about the rights and social services available for the victims.
- 7) If required the victim is provided with sick leave.

Analytical report  
State authorities' response to the cases  
of domestic violence during crisis situations  
(in particular, COVID-19) and recommendations  
for improvement

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