

Workshop Conclusions: Online-Conference Sharing beyond borders 2020, 10.07. 2020

Workshop 8 Violence Against Women and New Approaches for Empowerment

Moderator report: Diana Bayer, Women's Office of the City of Ulm

Bridget Penhale, UK

The first input came from Bridget Penhale. She has worked many years as a social worker, in 1996 she took up a fulltime academic post and is currently a Reader in Mental Health of Older People at the University of East Anglia, UK.

Violence is always a deprivation of rights! There is also always a pattern of abuse, no matter if it is physical or psychological. You find victims of domestic violence with any age, any sex, with any religious, ethnical or social background. Some victims have been suffering from violence for 30 or 40 years. But so far there is no public awareness about elder abuse, it is not visible in society or publicity. Bridget Penhale stresses that it is important to name the topic: "We live in a society where elder abuse, adult protection and safeguarding, domestic violence against elder, care of older people and mental health problems relating to older people seem to be of minor interest." For example, there exist only a few studies on these themes, e.g. the reasons for abuse.

Abuse and neglect of elders should be named that way as well, but there are some experts who want to rename it as "inadequate care". "This would be simply a distortion of the facts!", so Penhale.

There can be a summary of critical facts for elder abuse: poverty, neglect, additional stress such as financial uncertainty, abuse in childhood or later, ... But you find the victims throughout society.

Bridget Penhale emphasized that violence is not inherited but there is the possibility of transmission, e.g. learned behaviour in childhood. The extend of violence during the pandemic is unknown. There are so far no numbers available.

Materials and Books:

Bows, H. (2019). *Sexual Violence Against Older People*. Oxon: Routledge.

Bows, H. (2018b). Sexual violence against older people: A review of the empirical literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19(5), 567-583.

Studies of University of Göttingen and University of Münster, Germany.

Katarína Scott, SVK

The second input was given from Katarina Scott. She is project coordinator of the Union of Mother Centres in Slovakia. She is a very passionate activist in this grassroots organization and an expert in fundraising activities. 80% of the work in the Mother Centres is performed by volunteers: "Women for women". Women who have been abused or became a victim of violence volunteer. These former victims are coached to empower other victims and to help them to gain back their self-esteem.

The Mother Centres offer advice, like working out a safety plan for each woman who is threatened by partner violence or they offer abused women shelter. Katarina Scott

emphasized: "It is important to connect the help and to coordinate the help in the community. This is the main endeavour of Mother Centres."

Jelena Brkic, SRB

Jelena Brkic is a trusted Mother Centre grassroots activist and change maker in Serbia. In her work she focuses on women from the Roma community. Creating space was the basis of mobilization, encouraging and developing a caring community. People flower up in the Mother Centre Aurora Mine. They develop as an individual and grow as a group. Community ties are being build on the horizontal level. Jelena Brkic and her team get into dialogue with local authorities and institutions.

Discussion and Statements

- How can we improve prevention work? How can we strengthen women and young girls, so that they don't become victims of domestic violence or experience violence from their partner? An early approach is important, we should start early in education, e.g. in schools to build up self-esteem and empower the youth.
- How can we achieve more general respect for women in society? All women, girls and boys have the right of integrity and to live a life without violence! The victims differ very much. With growing age also diversity increases. To seek help is nothing to be ashamed of. Not the victim of violence is to be blamed but the offender.
- Violence against women has to be a main topic in politics. There has to be an open official statement that we want to live in a society without violence. Politicians, local authorities, civil society and civil organizations have the responsibility to ensure safety for all people!

Diana Bayer
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