

COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Annual Report

March 2006 – February 2007

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Message from the Minister

Each and every one of us is entitled to live in safety and security. We are, above all, entitled to live in safety within our own homes and amongst our families. Violence, particularly against women, children and the elderly, is a grave and acute problem which concerns all of society. The victims of domestic violence deserve all the protection and support that society can extend to them.

Just over twenty five years ago, the first women's shelter opened in Malta. Scepticism and cynicism about the issue were originally rife. Awareness on this shocking reality started to increase gradually. Today, there is a network of services offering support and protection to women and children victims of domestic violence. These years have been marked by major developments and changes to our legislation. Indeed, the Domestic Violence Act, which led to the setting up of the Domestic Violence Commission, was one of the most significant milestones.

Together, we worked to offer women and children an opportunity to move away from the misery and harm of violent relationships, through an array of services provided by different public and voluntary organisations. Women and children who experience violence require empowerment through support and counselling to find the inner strength to rebuild their shattered lives. We have successfully developed a coherent range of professional support services. I believe that we ought to continue to strengthen the opportunities for women and children experiencing violence to have more options, so that when they disclose what is happening in their homes, they are listened to and believed, and offered the support and guidance needed.

The Commission's role is to continue to highlight the country's needs to respond to the reality of domestic violence in our society. It is an important foundation that will continue to make things happen with the most effective and efficient manner in the interest of victims. This first annual report sets out a broad vision for the Commission which will be working closely with entities to raise standards, to coordinate services, as well as raising the awareness to the stark reality of violence.

I wish to thank all the Commission members and all those working in the field of domestic violence. Let us remain committed to eradicate all forms of violence, and to treat all victims of violence with dignity and respect.

Dolores Cristina

Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity



Foreword

The domestic violence law had been long awaited by many in the field, including the various women's organisations, the service providers and the service users. When it was launched in March 2006 it was greeted with great excitement and hope that now things would start to get better for the people who experience domestic violence. As a Commission set up by that legislation, we are aware of the responsibility that we carry towards these people and have been doing our best to start to make things happen. We are also aware that change does not occur overnight, but that it is a slow, incremental process. Nevertheless, I believe it is fair to say that, as can be seen from this report, we have made significant inroads and have several projects in progress. This is due to the dedication of both the various Commission members (past and present), including the secretary, as well as the various stakeholders in the field. The cooperation on the part of the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity has also played a crucial part to this effect.

This is not to say, however, that we will be resting on our laurels – far from it! In the coming year we hope to start to see some of the fruit of our work to date, as well as initiate various other projects. Our priorities must be to publish the national action plan against domestic violence and to work towards establishing an effective data collection process that will allow us to better understand, and monitor the situation, as well as any changes therein. At the same time, raising general awareness about this issue and its ramifications and effects on other members of the family and of society remains of great importance.

We start our second year older and hopefully slightly wiser, and even more committed to combating the social scourge which is domestic violence.

Thanks for the work done must go to each and every member of the Commission in the past year, to the various Ministry officials and to the service providers all of whom have helped and offered guidance in our quest to ease the lot of those who experience domestic violence.

Marceline Naudi
Chairperson

1. Introduction

The Commission on Domestic Violence was established under Article 3 of the Domestic Violence Act, on the 1st March 2006. The main role of the Commission is that of advising the Minister responsible for social policy on all aspects of Domestic Violence.

2. Definition

In the Domestic Violence Act, ‘**domestic violence**’ is defined as any act of violence, even if only verbal, perpetrated by a household member upon another household member and includes any omission which causes physical or moral harm to the other.

3. Launch of the Commission

The Commission was officially launched by the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, the Honourable Dolores Cristina, on Thursday 30th March 2006 at the Main Board Room of the Ministry. In attendance were Mr Joseph Ebejer, Permanent Secretary, and Mr Jesmond Schembri, Head of Secretariat. The launch was attended by press photographers and a press statement was released by Ms Maria Schranz, the Ministry’s Communications Co-ordinator.

4. Terms of reference

The terms of reference of the Commission on Domestic Violence are laid down under Article 4, of the said Domestic Violence Act. These are reproduced below.

“The Commission shall have the function of advising the Minister on all aspects of domestic violence and in particular on:

- (a) increasing the awareness and understanding of domestic violence and harassment and their consequences and on ways and means to reduce their incidence;
- (b) areas of domestic violence on which research is necessary or desirable;
- (c) strategies to expose domestic violence and to facilitate the intervention of public and private agencies and entities with respect to victims and perpetrators of such violence;
- (d) educating the public on all aspects of domestic violence;
- (e) ways to facilitate communication between public and private agencies and entities involved in action against domestic violence;
- (f) standards for care facilities for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, including public or private shelter services or facilities;
- (g) standards and protocols for practitioners;

- (h) procedures for the effective co-ordination on a national level of the activities of public and private agencies and entities engaged in the giving of services on domestic violence issues including support services;
- (i) a comprehensive and co-ordinated plan for the collection of data concerning domestic violence for use by the courts, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, health care practitioners, social workers and other agencies and entities in a manner that protects the identity of victims of domestic violence;
- (j) developing a comprehensive plan for a multidisciplinary approach of active prevention and early intervention;
- (k) specialized training for professional groups involved; and
- (l) consulting and networking with other relevant national and international entities.”

5. Composition

At its inception, the Commission was composed of a chairperson and seven members, all of whom brought with them specific expertise relevant to the issue of domestic violence, and included a member from Gozo to ensure reference to Gozo’s specific situation. The diverse expertise of the members spans from direct hands-on experience to policy, service provision, planning and research.

The original members were:

Dr Miriam Camilleri (Chairperson)
Ms Maria Attard
Mr Albert Bell
Sr Joan Garner
Dr Roberta Lepre`
Dr Marceline Naudi
Mr Cornelius Mulvaney
Insp Sharon Tanti

Dr Miriam Camilleri offered her resignation on 14th July 2006 due to other work commitments. The Commission continued to meet informally until Dr Marceline Naudi was appointed Chairperson in December 2006. Inspector Louise Calleja replaced Superintendent Sharon Tanti on 1st January 2007.

The current members are:

Dr Marceline Naudi (Chairperson)
Ms Maria Attard
Mr Albert Bell
Insp Louise Calleja
Sr Joan Garner
Dr Roberta Lepre`
Mr Cornelius Mulvaney

The Commission is currently one member short.

The Commission is also supported by Ms Doris Vassallo, who performs the functions of Secretary to the Commission.

6. Commission Meetings

Between March 2006 and February 2007 the Commission met twelve times, as follows:

	Date	Attendance
Meeting 1:	Thursday, 30 th March 2006	7/8
Meeting 2:	Thursday, 20 th April 2006	8/8
Meeting 3:	Monday, 15 th May 2006	8/8
Meeting 4:	Monday, 12 th June 2006	6/8
Meeting 5:	Wednesday 26 th July 2006	6/7
Meeting 6:	Monday 04 th September 2006	4/7
Meeting 7:	Monday 18 th September 2006	6/7
Meeting 8:	Tuesday 17 th October 2006	5/7
Meeting 9:	Wednesday 15 th November 2006	6/7
Meeting 10:	Friday 15 th December 2006	3/7
Meeting 1:	Tuesday 16 th January 2007	6/7
Meeting 2:	Tuesday 06 th February 2007	7/7

The duration of each meeting was approximately 3 hours.

The venue for the meetings was the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, in Valletta, except for one meeting which was held in Dar Guzeppa Debono in Gozo.

7. Finance

When the Commission was set up in March 2006, no funds were allocated. The Chairperson and the members of the Commission were awarded annual honoraria of Lm1,000 and Lm750 respectively. From January 2007 the Commission was allocated a budget of Lm10,000 out of which the honoraria are to be paid. The remaining Lm3,750 are to be utilized by the Commission for any projects it deems fit. The Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity is committed to provide additional funds from other budgetary allocations, as and when necessary for any project that is deemed essential to the functions of the Commission.

8. Activities

Between March 2006 and February 2007, the Chairperson and members of the Commission were invited to attend and participate in a number of activities, as listed hereunder. All the activities listed below were attended by at least one or more members, including the Secretary to the Commission. Members' participation in the various seminars enabled the Commission to raise its profile and emphasize the importance of Domestic Violence as an issue in Malta.

- Informal networking gathering of women in decision-making positions at St James Cavalier to celebrate International Women's Day, organized by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality for men and women (NCPE), on the 8th March 2006.
- Opening of the new extension at Dar Merhba Bik, shelter for women experiencing domestic violence and their children, organized by the Good Shepherd Sisters & Ms Anne Cachia, on the 8th March 2006.
- Participation in a Consultation Seminar on the EU Green Paper on Mental Health: Improving the mental health of the population – Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union, organised by the Richmond Foundation, at St James Cavalier, on the 21st April 2006.
- Participation in a focus group, entitled Partners in Government, organized by the Ministry of Health, Elderly & Community Care as part of the Consultation process of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (Chapter on Health & Long Term Care), at the Department of Health Information on the 5th May 2006.
- Seminar on Parenting, to celebrate the International Day of Families, organised by the National Commission for the Family (KNF), at Centru Hidma Socjali, on the 15th May 2006.
- Participation in a Seminar on Domestic Violence, organized by the 'L-Ghaqda Studenti tal-Ligi', at the University of Malta, on the 31st October 2006.
- Participation in a Seminar on Domestic Violence Law organized by the Maltese Psychological Association, at the Professional Centre, on the 15th November 2006.
- An exhibition to mark the Elimination of Violence against Women – 25th November organized by the Commission on Domestic Violence, held in the internal Courtyard of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, between the 20th November 2006 and the 11th December 2006.

- International Conference to launch a campaign ‘Stop Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence’ organized by the Council of Europe in Madrid, on the 27th November 2006.
- Participation in a seminar on Gender Violence organized by Dr Ruth Farrugia and Faculty of Laws students at the University of Malta, on the 6th December 2006.
- National Conference entitled Enhancing Social Inclusion – Moving Forward Together, organized by the Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate of the Ministry for the Family & Social Solidarity, at Le Meridien Hotel Phoenicia, on the 26th January 2007.
- Third Anniversary Conference organized by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, at the Dolmen Hotel, on the 9th February 2007.
- Participation in a Conference entitled ‘How can Social Work Services better meet the Needs of People in our Communities’ organized by the Maltese Association of Social Workers in collaboration with the Dept of Social Policy and Social Work of the University of Malta, at the Westin Dragonara on the 16-17th February 2007.

In addition the Commission was also invited to participate in the National Conference on the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion – Health and Long Term Care, organized by the Ministry of Health, Elderly & Community Care, on the 16th May 2006. The Chairperson was however unable to attend.

9. National Action Plan on Domestic Violence

In its very first meeting, the Commission agreed upon the need to build a national action plan for the active prevention, early intervention, and support and follow-up of persons experiencing domestic violence, perpetrators and third parties (children and/other dependants). The Commission also agreed that in order to attain this objective, it had to understand (a) the structural and operational links between the various entities which interfaced with persons experiencing domestic violence and perpetrators, and (b) the service user/ perpetrator flow. In so doing, it would identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the systems and address them accordingly. In order to produce a national action plan, the Commission will have to work with all the entities involved, such that it would engender universal ownership of the plan. The national action plan should lay down the objectives, targets, and recommended action, in the fields of prevention, early intervention, support and follow-up.

The Council of Europe blueprint for the campaign to eliminate violence against women, including domestic violence, is now being considered as the major foundation for the development of Malta’s National Action Plan for the sector.

10. Awareness-raising

10.1 Awareness-raising: Commission Level

The Commission agreed that there were various levels of awareness-raising. The first level was at Commission level itself. Since not all the members were equally informed about the various issues and/or held different aspects of knowledge, it was felt that internal presentations should be made by members in their turn. These presentations, which were followed by a discussion, included the following areas:

- ‘An Overview of services for persons experiencing domestic violence’ by Dr Marceline Naudi
- ‘Domestic Violence: Recent Legislative Developments’ by Dr Roberta Lepre’
- ‘The Police: Statistics 2003-2005’ by Sup Sharon Tanti

10.2 Awareness Raising and Collaboration: Professionals & Other Stakeholders

The second level of awareness-raising was at the level of professionals and other stakeholders. As a first step of increasing awareness of both the Commission as well as the issue of domestic violence amongst a number of professionals who may be either directly or indirectly involved with domestic violence, the Commission sent out over 60 letters of introduction to individuals, agencies, government departments, government-appointed commissions, professional organizations and associations, NGOs, and Church organizations, including the Curiae of Malta and Gozo. It was hoped that these letters would also serve to foster liaison between the Commission and the various entities, and would serve as the first step towards the eventual formulation of a national action plan encompassing all possible stakeholders. A good number of replies were received by the Commission, in which recipients stressed their commitment in collaboration with the Commission in its endeavours to tackle the issue of domestic violence. These replies are considered very positive by the Commission. Now that the Commission has been re-appointed, further correspondence and meetings where appropriate with various stakeholders will be held.

10.2.1 Presentations

Members of the Commission gave presentations in two seminars organized by Law Students, one by the Maltese Psychologists Association and another by the Malta Association of Social Workers in collaboration with the Dept of Social Policy & Social Work of the University of Malta. This enabled the Commission to raise awareness about the Commission, the issue of domestic violence, as well as the recent legal developments amongst members of professions that touch with the issue.

10.2.2 Communicating with Judiciary

Following the legal presentation it became immediately clear to the Commission that the Judiciary play a crucial role in the success or otherwise of the new legislative framework and that it was therefore of paramount importance that they are fully aware of the situation of domestic violence and the recent developments. The Commission deliberated possible ways to ensure this, including the possibility of an informal semi-social gathering hosted by the Minister herself. In early June the Commission put forward this suggestion to the Minister and it was considered for the middle of July, but unfortunately due to the resignation of the previous Chairperson, however, the idea was abandoned. Ways of best communicating with the Judiciary has now been taken up again and the Minister was approached once more on 6th January 2007.

10.3 Awareness raising: General public

The Commission believes that ideally awareness raising aimed at the general public should follow that aimed at professionals. This view is also shared by Agenzija Appogg. Nonetheless the Commission realizes that some limited awareness raising is appropriate. Since the Commission had no funds or adequate human resources of its own in 2006, it needed to work in collaboration with other entities, such as Agenzija Appogg, or gain funds from some EU or other project. Even in this instance it would still need to work with other entities to make up for its lack of resources, and to avoid duplication of resources. In this context a letter was sent to the CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, requesting that the Commission be informed and consulted in its process of formulation and implementation of social marketing plans relevant to the field of domestic violence. Mr Joe Gerada, CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services agreed that the Commission will be informed of any public campaigns on domestic violence that might be organized in the future.

Once the Commission felt that it had started to establish itself, then participation in media events increased, as is detailed below. The aim is to start raising the profile of the Commission and its work in increasing Malta's awareness of the seriousness of the issue of domestic violence.

The Commission organized its first public event, in the form of an exhibition, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – 25th November.

- Exhibition to mark the Elimination of Violence against Women – 25th November

An exhibition was held in the Courtyard of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity in Valletta from the 20th November 2006 till the 11th December 2006 and was open to the general public. The exhibition was organized by the Commission with the participation of the Domestic Violence Unit from Agenzija Appogg, the Shelters and students from Secondary Schools. The exhibition included information on the services provided by the Shelters. It also gave the opportunity to the women and children residing in the Shelters to exhibit drawings and crafts. Since education plays an important role in the elimination of domestic

violence, students from secondary schools were invited to contribute by providing paintings. A press release about the exhibition was issued by the Commission.

▪ Activity in Gozo

To mark the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women, a talk was given to secondary students aged 14-15 years by the Personal Social Development teachers, since it is a subject included in their syllabus. A discussion followed with the participation of the students.

- An article written by Dr Roberta Lepre` entitled 'Domestic Violence: Recent Legislative Developments' appeared on the Sunday Times in November 2006.
- A press release was issued about the Commission's participation in the Council of Europe's Conference to launch the Campaign on elimination of violence against women including domestic violence in November 2006.
- Participation in the programme 22am shown on Channel 12 on the 19th January 2007 and 2nd February 2007.
- An interview with journalist Juan Ameen which was published in The Malta Independent on the 29th of January 2007.
- A telephone interview broadcast on RTK on 5th February 2007
- Participation in the programme Teen Trouble on Net Television on the 26th February 2007.

10.4 Website

The Commission's website will be part of the Ministry's website. The information on the website will include information on the Commission, the Domestic Violence Act and links to websites of other organizations who deal with cases of domestic violence.

10.5 Logo

After following the usual procedure including requesting a minimum of three quotations for the design of an appropriate logo, the Commission considered various designs and has now chosen a logo to help establish its identity. This logo is in the process of being commissioned.

11. Service and Policy Development – a grass roots orientation

11.1 Meeting with the Designated Agency responsible for the provision of preventive, therapeutic and, or treatment programmes for persons experiencing domestic violence and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Commission had its first meeting with Appogg Senior Management Team and the Research Executive of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services on the 31st May 2006. This meeting was very cordial and served to emphasize the mutual commitment for collaboration. The two sides agreed on various matters including a possible joint activity aimed at professionals and to organize a common event to celebrate the International Day for Violence against women in November. The common event was realized in the organization of the exhibition previously mentioned. Both sides agreed that the data and statistics issue should be addressed as a priority. Other issues would be training of professionals, need for more social workers, especially trained in newer emerging patterns, such as teenage perpetrators, as well as the need for more child psychologists. Agenzija Appogg supports the writing of a National Action Plan on Domestic Violence and will make its statistics and reports available to the Commission. Both sides agreed to set up a subcommittee to focus on issues of service provision. Following the meeting with Agenzija Appogg the Commission sent a letter to the Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Social Welfare Services, further requesting that it be kept regularly informed regarding service demand trends and fluctuations.

11.2 Meeting with Mr Joe Gerada, CEO, FSWS and Ms MaryAnne Gauci, Adult and Family Service Manager at Agenzija Appogg in relation to the Commission's vision to the domestic violence sector.

On 5th October 2006, members of the Commission met with Mr Joe Gerada, CEO for the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and Ms Maryanne Gauci, Adult & Family Service Manager, Appogg. The Commission raised some important points with regards to the services provided by Agenzija Appogg and how they can be improved for the benefit of the service users.

Points discussed included:

- ⇒ the writing of an action plan for the domestic violence sector with the participation of all the relevant stakeholders;
- ⇒ the problem of limited legal advice available for service users;
- ⇒ the need to increase awareness of the new domestic violence act both amongst professionals and the general public;
- ⇒ the shortage of psychologists;
- ⇒ the importance of evaluation of services;
- ⇒ the need to be kept informed with regards to statistics.

11.3 Meeting with the Domestic Violence Workers from Agenzija Appogg, Dar Merhba Bik, Dar Qalb ta' Gesu', Ghabex and Dar Tereza Spinelli

The members of the Commission were invited to the Domestic Violence Workers forum on the 3rd October 2006, held at Dar Merhba Bik. This forum includes social workers from the domestic violence unit and the various shelters in Malta who provide services to persons experiencing domestic violence. During this meeting, the domestic violence workers raised various problems they encounter in their work as well as made suggestions so that procedures and services can be improved. The Commission also suggested that an evaluation of the services provided should be made. From the results, the Commission will have a clear vision of what services should be improved.

Issues raised included:

- ⇒ the problem the women face in getting effective legal aid;
- ⇒ the fear the women experience when proceeding against the perpetrator which is exacerbated by the length of time it takes to get their case heard (notwithstanding the provision of a 'fast-track' in the law), and the lack of protection orders being issued;
- ⇒ the urgent need for guidelines to be issued to the police force, and for training for the police force on this issue;
- ⇒ the need for a coordinated approach between the Police, the Court Registrar and the Judiciary to hasten procedures in cases of domestic violence (including stopping mediation once domestic violence has been established);
- ⇒ the reluctance on the part of private General Practitioner's to certify injuries inflicted as a result of domestic violence;
- ⇒ insufficient human resources both in Child Protection and the Psychological services, hindering the progress of service users of the Domestic Violence Unit.

11.4 Meeting with His Excellency Mgr Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, Mr Peter Paul Portelli, Social Worker and Mr Laner Cassar, Psychologist

The Commission is aware that the situation regarding the problem of domestic violence in Gozo is specific to Gozo and is therefore pleased to have a member who is Gozitan and therefore more familiar with the differences that exist. From the first meeting the Commission had agreed that it should hold one or two meetings per year in Gozo. A meeting at Dar Guzeppa Debono in Gozo was held on the 4th September 2006. His Excellency Mgr Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, Mr Peter Paul Portelli, Social Worker and Mr Laner Cassar, Psychologist were present for the meeting. The aim of this meeting was to familiarize the Commission with the situation of Domestic Violence in Gozo. Mr Peter Paul Portelli and Mr Laner Cassar mentioned the fact that since Gozo is a small community, they encounter obstacles that hinder them from dealing with domestic violence cases. It was also mentioned that a government-owned shelter should be set up in Gozo where everyone is accepted and is open twenty four hours a day. The Bishop agreed that hidden cases of domestic violence exist in Gozo and further agreed, on the Commission's suggestion, that domestic violence issues will be discussed in the College of Chaplains.

11.5 Sub-committee on Service Provision

Following the various meetings held with stakeholders in service provision, the Commission decided to set up a sub-committee to look at service provision, and to ensure good liaison with the people and agencies in the front line. This Sub-committee includes representatives from the Commission, Agenzija Appogg, a present or former service user, representative from Gozo and from non-governmental organizations, namely Dar Merhba Bik, Dar Qalb ta' Gesu` and Dar Tereza Spinelli. This is in the process of being established.

12. EU and International Projects

12.1 Community Action Programme to combat social exclusion, 2002-2006

In early June, the Commission was approached by the Malta Resource Centre and Impetus Europe Consulting Group Ltd for the possibility of participating in a project to raise awareness relevant to social inclusion and protection. The Commission agreed to participate since by participating along with other organizations under the umbrella of a lead partner, the Commission could focus on a small project, which would be worthwhile. The Commission nominated one member to attend a first informative meeting which was to be convened by the Malta Resource Centre. Unfortunately the Commission was informed towards the end of June that the proposal could not proceed further.

12.2 Daphne III Programme, 2007-2013

Following a meeting that the Chairperson, Dr Marceline Naudi had with Mr Bryan Magro and Mr Jesmond Schembri, Ministry's officials on the 17th January 2007, it was agreed that a member of the Commission would be Malta's representative for Daphne III Programme as from January 2007. The Daphne Programme is run over a period of seven years from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013 and is aimed to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women and to protect persons experiencing violence and groups at risk. Daphne III is part of a general programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice', and is a continuation of the policies and objectives laid down in Daphne I and Daphne II programmes. The objectives of the programme are aimed at preventing and fighting all forms of violence including sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings, occurring in the public and private domain.

12.3 High Level Conference organized by the Council of Europe to launch a Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence

The Council of Europe held a conference in Madrid for high level officials from its member states to launch a campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including domestic violence. This campaign will run until 2008 with the participation of governments, parliaments and local authorities. The aim of this campaign is to create public awareness of the extent of violence against women and therefore encourage the introduction of new laws to stop this violence. A task force from the Council of Europe published a blueprint in which suggestions were made to all participating countries on how to combat violence. The Commission intends to take part in this pan-European

campaign against domestic violence and to meet the Council of Europe's requests as far as is possible. The Commission started to discuss certain issues indicated in the blueprint and intends to continue working with all key stakeholders in the domestic violence field to attempt to meet the CoE's demands.

12.4 Appointment of High Level Official

The Chairperson of the Commission has been appointed by the Government to act as the High Level Official for the purpose of liaising with the Council of Europe on matters relating to the Council of Europe Campaign. High level officials have to submit a final report on activities and results of their national campaigns.

12.5 UN Questionnaire on indicators on violence against women and on measures to eliminate such violence

In May 2006 the Commission was requested to fill in a questionnaire forwarded by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences. As already reported above, this exercise served to highlight the problems we have in our data and statistics, as well as the great lack of national prevalence figures.

12.6 WHO Questionnaire

The Commission was requested to fill in a questionnaire forwarded by WHO entitled ADRISK about Violence Prevention and risk-taking behaviour among young people. This was done in collaboration with Dr T. Firman Tilney as the focal point on the part of the Department of Health.

12.7 Council of Europe Questionnaire

In January 2007, the Commission received and duly completed a questionnaire from the Council of Europe on the national campaign action in the field of combating violence against women, including domestic violence.

13. Work carried out by the Co-ordinated Response Team (CRT) on Domestic Violence, within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity

An early decision taken by the Committee at its very first meeting was to use and build upon any relevant work done by the previous committee (Co-ordinated Response Team on Domestic Violence) which had been set up within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. Two important pieces of work were identified.

13.1 The first had been a **focus group study on the perceived needs of shelter users**. The information obtained through this study was presented to the Committee. Relevant issues which had been identified will help inform the Commission's strategy.

13.2 The second important piece of work regarded the drafting of **police guidelines**. These guidelines had originally been drafted by police officers participating in a one week training programme in 1997, held for the vice squad police and social workers from the then Social Welfare Development Programme (later to become Appogg). These guidelines had been published by the United Nations. The CRT had brought these to the attention of the Commissioner of Police and the Assistant Commissioner had taken them upon himself and drafted new guidelines. Following the passing of the new legislation, the guidelines were being further amended by the Assistant Commissioner. Once these are finalized they shall be distributed within the police force as an internal circular. To date, these have not yet been received by the Commission. A meeting with the Commissioner of Police has now been requested. The Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity is also working in liaison with the Police with a view to finalizing these guidelines in the near future.

14. Research and Statistics

The issue of relevant data and statistics has been identified as a priority. Currently data concerning domestic violence is not centralized, with the various stakeholders collecting their own data according to their own needs. This might result in discrepancies in data collected from different sources.

Although a preliminary search carried out by a Commission member yielded a number of under-graduate University theses on aspects of domestic violence, there is a lack of prevalence studies. The situation was made clearer when the Commission had to answer a questionnaire from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on indicators on violence against women and on measures to eliminate such violence.

The Commission had begun to discuss ways of approaching this problem, prior to the resignation of the previous Chairperson. This has now been taken up again. A meeting with the National Statistics Office is being considered. The Commission shall be looking into internationally used indicators of prevalence for domestic violence, as well as researching the possibility of participating in international prevalence surveys. In this respect it has also written to the CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, requesting that the Commission be supplied with any process and outcome measurement studies pertinent to the domestic violence field. The Commission has tried to make contact in relation to IVAWS projects and requested information on the possibility of participating in these projects to enable it to achieve its role as a catalyst for the collation of prevalence and incidence data on domestic violence in Malta. The Commission intends to set up a Sub-committee on Research and Statistics.

15. Conclusion

In this first year, notwithstanding the setback of the resignation of the previous Chairperson and the post remaining vacant for almost half the period, the Commission has laid the foundations for the work which lies ahead. It has begun building liaisons with a wide spectrum of stakeholders, who may be directly or indirectly involved in the issue of domestic violence in Malta. The Commission believes that in order to be effective in its fight against domestic violence, it has to work with others, engaging their trust and collaboration, and taking into consideration the local cultures, including the Catholic faith. In this short year the Commission has increased the level of awareness of its own members, and has considered how best to tackle the issue of awareness raising amongst the various professionals. It has begun looking into service provision issues through a meeting with Appogg, a meeting with the Domestic Violence Workers' Forum, as well as the setting up of a subcommittee on this topic with representatives from the Commission, Appogg and NGO's involved in this area. It has also tried to establish stronger links with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, and has begun discussions regarding the strengthening of data and statistics on domestic violence, including the setting up of a sub-committee on research and data. All in all it has been a hard-working year, with the Commission finding its feet and starting to get established, and going up the learning curve. This augurs well for the next year and onwards.