MALTA

GENERAL COUNTRY INFORMATION

Population: 404,962
Female population: 204,143
Member of Council of Europe: 1965
Member of European Union: 2004
Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence signed: No

FACTS AND FIGURES

Prevalence survey data on violence against women:
Prevalence of male violence against women: 26.5 per cent of women had experienced DV at sometime in their lifetime, 1 in every 4. All types of violence-physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial.

Prevalence of male sexual violence against women:
Out of 1,154 women interviewed who were ever partnered, 109 (9%), experienced one or more of the sexual abusive behaviours and 32 per cent of the 109 are currently experiencing sexual violence.

Crime statistics reported by the Police:
Number of femicides:
2009 – 2 victims; 2010 – 1 victim

Number of cases of male violence against women:
2009 – 584; 2010 – 682

National Criminal Justice Statistics:
Male violence against women:
2009 – 51; 2010 - 98

SERVICES FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

National Women’s Helplines
There is a national helpline in Malta set up by Appogg Agency called SPL179 (Support line 179), set up in 1996 and is state run. The helpline provides support primarily to women and girls survivors of all forms of violence including domestic violence though it also provides general support to others.

The helpline is free of charge and is open 24/7. Bi-lingual support is provided in Maltese and English. The helpline is funded by state, with two full time staff and the support of around 80 volunteers. The helpline received 397 calls in relation to domestic violence in 2009 and 465 in 2010.

Therefore Malta fulfills the Council of Europe standard of providing a national confidential 24/7 helpline, free of charge, covering all forms of violence against women a helpline for women.
Other National Helplines

There are three other national helplines, emergency 112, crime stop 119 which are open 24/7 and ‘Be Smart online’ (monitoring internet pornography in liaison with the police, cybercrime) which is open during office hours. The helplines are all state run, bi-lingual and free of charge.

Women’s Shelters

There are four shelters in Malta, one run by the state and two by religious organisations and one by an NGO, and all four use a gender specific approach. The first shelter was opened in Merhba Bik in early 1980’s by a religious organisation and the most recent shelter was opened in 2000 by Appogg Agency.

Three of the shelters specifically support women survivor’s of domestic violence while one supports women survivors of all forms of violence. There are no specific shelters for migrant women in the country.

The shelters are free of charge and over two thirds offer access 24/7. They provide a total of 43 places for women and their children, with over 75% having an age limit of 16 or under for boys. Malta fulfils the Council of Europe recommendation of safe accommodation in specialised women’s shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population. However, young adolescent girls aged 15 – 17 years with challenging behaviors have also been placed intermittently in the state run shelter, slightly reducing the number of places available to women survivors of violence.

All four shelters offer access to migrant, undocumented and asylum seeking women survivors of violence and over three quarters of the shelters offer access to women with disabilities. The majority of shelters allow women and children to stay for up to 12 months or more, with only on shelter having a limit of up to 3 months. The shelters have approximately 35 staff members of whom over 76 per cent are dedicated to the work with children as well.

The shelters are funded primarily by the state (25% permanent and 65% temporary), with other support from private donations (10%).

National statistics on the users of shelters are not collected. 69 women were accommodated in the state run shelter in 2009 and 82 in 2010; 70 women were accommodated in Merhba Bik, run by a religious organisation, in 2009 and 89 in 2010.

Table of Women’s SHELTERS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Shelters</th>
<th>Shelter Places available</th>
<th>Shelter Places needed</th>
<th>Shelter Places missing</th>
<th>Shelters with 24/7 service</th>
<th>Shelters with multi-lingual service</th>
<th>State funding per %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>90 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Shelters

Malta also has two other shelters one for the homeless and one for people with mental health challenges.

Sexual Violence Centres for Women (and Girls) Survivors of Violence

There are no gender specific sexual violence centres in Malta for women and girls. Therefore Malta does not meet the
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Council of Europe recommendation of one centre providing services for women and children survivors of sexual violence per 200,000 inhabitants.

Women’s Centres for Survivors of Violence and their Children
Malta has no women’s centres providing support to survivors of violence and their children or general women’s centres.

National Networks of Women’s Services
There are no national networks or coalitions of shelter service providers, sexual violence centres or women’s centres in Malta.

Recent Changes in service provision
There were no changes in service provision for women survivors of violence during 2011.

Social and Economic Rights and Housing
Social security benefits are available to all citizens with residency rights in Malta including women survivors of violence. Social security benefits may be available to migrant women, undocumented women, and asylum seeking women depending on their status.

There are also housing programs which give women survivors of violence are given priority. Housing programs are also available to migrant women, undocumented women, and asylum seeking women.

Legal protection from violence
Protective orders were introduced in Malta in The Domestic Act, 2006. Police barring orders can be issued in cases of physical violence, threats of violence, psychological violence and stalking and other acts of violence, including financial, and even verbal. The protection can cover the victim’s dwelling, the surrounding area and other places such as workplace and schools the victim’s children attend and general contact prohibition.

Civil protection orders are available to victims in cases of physical and psychological violence, threats of violence and stalking and other forms of violence. They can cover the victim’s house the surrounding area and other places such as workplace and schools the victim’s children attend.

Criminal law protection orders are available in cases of physical and psychological violence, threats of violence and stalking. These protective measures can apply to the victim’s dwelling and surrounding areas and workplace and children’s schools and prohibit general contact.

Protection orders are available for to all family members including women and men, married cohabiting, same-sex and ex-partners partners, children and to migrant women, asylum seeking women and undocumented migrant women.

No data is available on the use of protective orders.

National Action Plans (NAP) and Coordinating Body
Malta has a national strategy to combat violence against women covering rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, so called “honor crimes” and forced marriages. There is a governmental coordinating body responsible for implementing and coordinating the policies regarding violence against women. It is an inter-ministerial body but does not have the power to make policy decisions, just recommendations. Independent women’s NGO are not members of the coordinating body.

CEDAW
In the concluding comments on Malta at the Forty - seventh session, October 2010, CEDAW expressed concern at the high prevalence of violence against women and the persistence of socio-cultural attitudes still condoning domestic violence and deterring women from reporting cases to the police. It was further concerned that the courts consider they have discretionary powers to stay domestic violence cases when the victim refuses to testify before the court, even when the
perpetrator has admitted the offence and evidence is available. The Committee also expressed concern at the lack of data collection on all forms and manifestations of violence against women. CEDAW urged Malta to strengthen the definition of the crimes of rape and violence to ensure that female victims of violence have immediate protection and access to a shelter, free legal aid and counselling.

Endnotes

1 Sources: 1.Perceptions of the Maltese Public on Domestic Violence, 2008. 2.‘The Prevelance of Domestic Violence against Women in Malta & its impact on their employment prospects’, ESF 3.43 dignity for Domestic Violence Survivors, Published December, 2011 (*note-both are on the DV Commission website)
2 Overall figure provided by the police of cases including slight injuries, not including grievous injuries.
3 A global figure from the police of cases of slight injuries and not grievous bodily harm.
4 A report recommending the setting up of a rape crises centre was submitted to the relevant Minister in 2011.