

**COMMUN-AID**

**INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS OF  
DIFFERENT ORIGINS TO RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS**

## **Recommendations**

**For the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence  
Against Female Migrant Domestic Workers**



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## THE COMMUN-AID PROJECT

COMMUN-AID is a project funded by the European Commission under the DAPHNE III Programme (JUST/2011/DAP/AG/3272). It was carried out in five European countries (Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Sweden and Slovenia) with the involvement of experts from the Netherlands.

The project aimed to increase the capacity of female migrant domestic workers to respond to sexual violence at domestic work through the development and testing of community-based interventions.

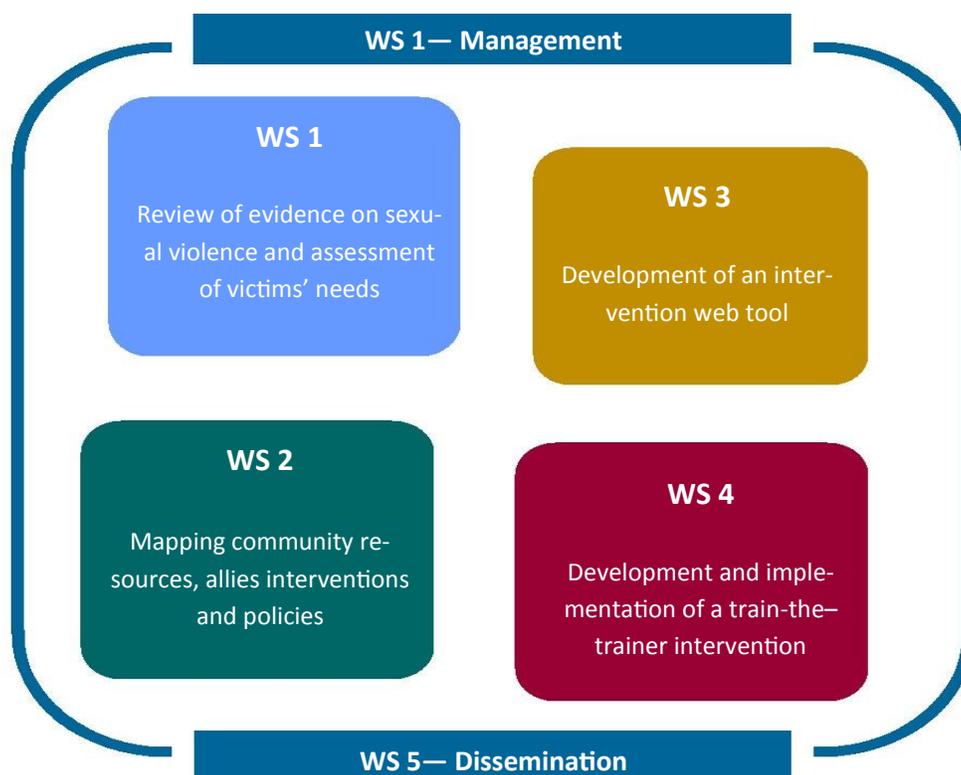
The COMMUN-AID project had a 2-year duration and accomplished the following:

1. Gain understanding on women's experiences of sexual victimization and identification of their needs in post-victimization support through rigorous qualitative research methods and approaches.
2. To develop a portfolio of community resources, allies, interventions and policies for sexually victimized migrant women using a mapping process and a qualitative research with key informants in all the partner countries

3. To develop a culturally and linguistically-appropriate web tool for the support of the sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers, which is accessible in 14 migrant languages (<http://www.domesticworksupport.info/>).

4. To design and pilot test a train-the-trainer programme for community education programmes, which aims at capacity development in the community through the training of community members on the prevention and management of sexual victimization at domestic work.

5. Raised awareness of relevant stakeholders such as policy makers, researchers, service providers, migrant domestic workers and the general public on the problem of sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers through community training, regional conferences, scientific publications, project newsletters and press releases and other dissemination activities in all the partner countries.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The set of recommendations, presented within this document, summarizes the knowledge gained from the COMMUN-AID project and aims to support policy makers, community workers, service providers and health professionals in the prevention and management of sexual violence against migrant domestic workers. The recommendations further aim to provide a shared basis of knowledge and understanding regarding the sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers as well as guidance towards planning and implementing improvements in professional practice.

The recommendations were formulated on the basis of the following collaborative tasks carried out as part of the COMMUN-AID project:

(a) A qualitative research with 66 sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers from Austria (n=15), Cyprus (n=16), Greece (n=20) and Sweden (n=15); (b) A systematic review of the literature (electronic and desk-based), from five scientific databases (PUBMED, SCOPUS, WEB OF SCIENCE, EBSCO and HEIN-ONLINE) and investigated sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers in the current research and policy agenda of Europe; (c) A qualitative research with 55 key informants from the

partner countries (AU, CY, GR, SE, SL) representing different sectors as follows: governmental organisations/public authorities (n=21), trade unions (n=2), employers' organisations (n=1), private corporations (n=3), non-governmental organisations (n=25), community groups (n=1), and others (n=2); (d) A mapping process of community resources, allies, policies and interventions carried out in the partner countries (AU, CY, GR, SE, SL); (e) A train-the-trainer programme, designed on the basis of the COMMUN-AID research outcomes for the purposes of community education and pilot-tested with 10 community members in each partner country (AU, CY, GR, SE, SL)

The recommendations are organized under four themes specific to interventions relevant to:

- Legislative and labour regulatory procedures.
- Structural and institutional procedures.
- Empowerment of migrant women and changes in public perceptions of migrant domestic workers.
- Increased research and improved data collection.

The recommendations will be distributed to relevant stakeholders engaged in the prevention and management of sexual violence against female migrants both in the partner countries and at European level.



Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn

# Empowerment of Female Migrant Domestic Workers

The following recommendations aim to improve the capacity and the skills of the female migrant domestic workers in dealing with sexual violence.

## Recommendation #1

Female migrant domestic workers should have the opportunity to develop personal skills in dealing with sexual violence, through training programmes.

## Recommendation #2

Female migrant domestic workers, who are employed via recruitment agencies, should receive comprehensive induction programs in the country of origin or destination.

## What we know

The COMMUN-AID project found that many of the female migrant domestic workers that were sexually victimized:

- Lacked information on their rights and the sources of formal and informal support.
- Lacked knowledge on the appropriate steps of reporting.

## Many victimized female domestic workers expressed the need for:

The COMMUN-AID project found that many of the female migrant domestic workers that were sexually victimized:

- Lacked information on their rights and the sources of formal and informal support.
- Lacked knowledge on the appropriate steps of reporting.
- Guidance regarding their rights and their obligations.
- Guidance in pursuance of a safe job.
- Guidance to acquire better job skills.
- Support in reporting their victimization.





## What we know

The COMMUN-AID project found that among the female migrant domestic workers who were sexually victimized:

- Few sought help from public organizations or NGOs.
- Few went to the police to report the incident out of fear of losing their job and fear of deportation, even when legally working.
- Few left their job immediately after their victimization mainly due to financial insecurity.
- Few enjoyed the support of social and family networks.

## Formal Support Following Sexual Violence

The following recommendations focus on the governmental and non-governmental support or care offered to victims of sexual violence at domestic work and aim to improve the quality of service provision through increasing the overall capacity of the existing services to deal with the migrant domestic worker population as well as through introducing migrant-friendly approaches and procedures. These recommendations are expected to improve the quality of contact of female migrant victims with the services and increase levels of reporting victimization and seeking professional support.

### Recommendation #1

Tailored services should be developed with a mission to tackle sexual violence against domestic workers and initiate action aimed at the prevention of the problem.

### Recommendation #2

Existing services addressing gender based violence should extend their mission and develop capacity in dealing with cases of sexual violence against domestic workers.

### Recommendation #3

Protocols of collaboration should be developed and introduced between services offering support to victims of sexual violence in domestic work in the governmental and non-governmental sectors, including GOs, NGOs, church and community groups, to ensure uniform standards of care and continuity of care for female migrants who are victims of sexual violence in domestic work.

### Recommendation #4

Interpreters and/or cultural mediators should be available in services who are in contact with sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers.

### Recommendation #5

Transcultural training should be offered to frontline professionals who support female migrant domestic workers that have been sexually victimized.

### Recommendation #6

Translated and culturally-appropriate information resources should be available in services offering professional assistance to female migrants, sexually victimized in domestic work.

## What we know

The COMMUN-AID project found that many of the female migrant domestic workers that were sexually victimized, regardless of their legal status:

- Were employed irregularly, in “atypical relationships” that did not follow the law provisions in terms of payment and social insurance.
- Worked as domestic workers due to the lack of language skills, the low educational level and the lack of qualifications, as well as due to the undocumented status, which did not allow official employment at a position corresponding to their qualification.

The COMMUN-AID project also found that:

- In some countries, legislation for sexual harassment in the workplace only targets harassment within the organization, i.e. violence from managers or between employees. The legislation does not apply to self-employed persons.

## Labour Regulations and Legislation

The following recommendations aim to improve the working conditions surrounding domestic work by acknowledging the special attributes that characterize working environment in the sector of domestic employment.

### Recommendation #1

Immediate ratification and transposition of the following instruments:

- ILO Convention 189.
- CoE Convention on VAW.
- EC Directive setting minimum standards for protection of victims of crimes.

### Recommendation #2

It is important Ministry of Labour and Labour codes to take responsibility of regulation of domestic workers in countries where regulation in this labour sector is overseen by Ministries of Interior and Migration Laws.

### Recommendation #3

Policies and measures addressing violence against domestic workers should be independent from the residence status and the immigration management mechanisms.

### Recommendation #4

Access to justice and protection, specifically access to shelter, should be made available and guaranteed under relevant national policies, regardless of status of employment and regardless residency status.

### Recommendation #5

All labour regulations and policies available to other types of employment, should be extended to domestic work. Labour inspections should have access to and should perform regular inspections of work-place of domestic workers, i.e. private households.

### Recommendation #6

Evaluation of domestic work employers/employees should be performed upon contract termination, under the supervision of accredited employment agencies. Controlled access to evaluation forms should be permitted to all people seeking employment in domestic work.

### Recommendation #7

Formal/governmental monitoring mechanisms should be introduced to ensure that employment agencies respect employees' rights and that domestic work is performed in accordance with national labour laws, regulations or collective agreements pertaining to employment.



## Public Awareness

The following recommendations aim to highlight the need of awareness raising in various groups as a mean of increasing knowledge of human rights and reducing discrimination based on employment and ethnicity.

### Recommendation #1

Measures should be taken to increase the general public's awareness on the phenomenon of sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers.

### Recommendation #2

Campaigns should be organized, aimed at sensitizing of public officials, specifically police and health professionals, on the discrimination and violence faced by domestic workers.

### Recommendation #3

Public awareness raising campaigns should be organized aiming at combating gender- and racial- biased popular misperceptions and myths of domestic work.

### Recommendation #4

Measures should be taken to change the way domestic workers and sexual violence is represented in the media.

## Research and Monitoring

The following recommendations focus on data collection requirements and aim to strengthen the knowledge base on sexual violence against migrant domestic workers through rigorous research and efficient monitoring of the problem.

### Recommendation #1

Coherent and comparable data on the actual scale of sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers need to be collected through introducing widely accepted indicators.

### Recommendation #2

Research on the assessment of sexual violence against domestic workers should be stimulated at European level, to ensure measurement and monitoring of the problem across Europe.

## What we know

The COMMUN-AID project found that:

- Sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers is trivialized by the police.
- The vast majority of the sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers did not feel comfortable in reporting incidents of sexual violence to local authorities.
- Many sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers believed that they would not be believed and/or their case would not be taken seriously either because there were no witnesses or because they are migrants.
- Published evidence on sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers from the region of Europe is scarce. There is insufficient information and statistics available on the problem and this makes intervention strategies difficult.
- The majority of the sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers suffered:
  - (a) Depression and psychosomatic symptoms.

- (b) High levels of stress.
- (c) Economic difficulties due to their unemployment.
- (d) Negative feelings for men.
- (e) Mistrust for people.

A systematic literature review in five databases; PUBMED, SCOPUS, WEB OF SCIENCE, EBSCO and HEIN-ONLINE as well as in 20 peer-reviewed leading scientific journals in the fields of "Law", "Social Science" and "Health", issued in native languages, resulted in 26 articles potentially relevant to sexual violence against migrant domestic worker. A total of 12 articles out of the 26 met all the following inclusion criteria:

- (a) Published between 2003 and 2013
- (b) European setting.
- (c) Greek, German, Swedish, Slovenian and English language.
- (a) Comprising an abstract.
- (b) Focus on "Migrant domestic workers and sexual violence".

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