

Implementing community interventions to tackle sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers: 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, Slovenia and Sweden) 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. Gained understanding of women's experiences of sexual victimization and identified their needs in post-victimization support through rigorous qualitative research methods and approaches.
2. Developed 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. Developed 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.domesticworkersupport.info/>).
4. Designed and pilot tested a train-the-trainer programme for community education programmes, which



CONTENTS

The COMMUN-AID project.....	P.1-2
My story.....my life.....	P.2-3
COMMUN-AID facts.....	P. 3
The COMMUN-AID web tool.....	P. 4
Train-the-trainer programme.....	P. 5
Policy recommendations	P. 6
Dissemination activities.....	P. 7

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 all relevant stakeholders such as the policy makers, the researchers, the

The COMMUN-AID project (Cont.)

service providers, the 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.



My storymy life

Elena's experience of sexual harassment in domestic work

We came with my husband from Albania 15 years ago to work in Greece and bring up our children. Since then, I have been working as a house cleaner.

This was the only job I could do as I couldn't speak Greek at all. Within my previous employment, I experienced sexual harassment by a 65 year old divorced man. I used to clean his house every week. At the beginning he used to stare at me for hours while I was cleaning his house and although many things crossed my mind, I kept finding reasonable excuses for this behaviour.

Once he attempted to touch me but I had a quick reaction and he quitted, at least temporarily. I suddenly realized that he wanted more than my cleaning services. However, I pretended not to have realized that because I was afraid of losing my job. For more than a year, I reduced my exposure to him to a minimum by avoiding any bodily or visual contact with him within the house.

In fact, I tried to do things in a hurry, move suddenly to other rooms for different reasons and make up reasons to visit the bathroom several times a day. I

found this latter as a way to isolate myself and to think of my next reactions. I was under so much stress during that period that I developed an irritable bowel syndrome, which I never managed to cure since then. I did not talk to anyone about this, and I did not ask for help, because I was afraid. I did not want my husband to learn about it as I was afraid of his reaction. He would sometimes become bad tempered especially when he consumed alcohol. On the other hand, I kept hoping that things would become better or at least would not become worse and lose my job.

Unfortunately, my employer did not stop there. Once I washed the dishes and did not realize he was behind me. He came close to me and grabbed me. Although I panicked, I tried not to show that and make things worse. I calmly asked him what was that. He was straight with me and told me that he liked me a lot and that he would do anything for me, if I accepted to sleep with him. I told him that I was not prepared for such a discussion and asked him some time to think about it while trying to hide

My storymy life (Cont.)

from him that I was very upset. Many things crossed my mind until I left the house that day. I was not going to return.

I kept thinking that from this moment I would be jobless while I had to raise two children and pay for my rent. I was emotionally devastated. I cried a lot but I couldn't talk to anyone. I thought it would be better to hide this from my family and friends and try to find another job. I told my husband that my employer would move to another city and he would not need me anymore. Although he was both disappointed and annoyed, he did not ask me any unwanted questions. I had a very difficult time after that. I struggled to survive both financially and emotionally but I managed to go on with my life, as I had a family to support.



**Elena is a domestic worker who decided to share her story in order to help other female migrants to avoid being sexually victimized in domestic work. Elena is not her real name but was used for reasons of anonymity.*

Facts from the COMMUN-AID project

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

Many

- Were employed irregularly.
- Worked as domestic workers due to lack of language skills, lack of qualifications and due to an undocumented status.
- Lacked information on their rights and the sources of formal and informal support.
- Lacked knowledge on the reporting procedures.
- Felt uncomfortable in reporting incidents of sexual violence to local authorities.
- Were overwhelmed with feelings of isolation and discrimination by the receiving society.

Few

- Left the job immediately after their victimization mainly due to financial insecurity.
- Sought help from public organizations or NGOs due to mistrust in services.
- Went to the police to report the incident out of fear of job loss and deportation, even when legally working.
- Enjoyed the support of social and family networks.

Training community members to respond to sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers : The COMMUNAID Train-the-Trainer package

A competency-based Train-the-Trainer programme involving consultative, educational and community development modules on issues of sexual violence in domestic work was developed within the COMMUNAID project. The training programme aimed to: (a) explain the concepts of sexual violence and sexual victimization in domestic work and underline the importance of speaking out against sexual violence and establishing clear community norms about what types of behaviour are and are not acceptable, (b) provide information and knowledge on the risk factors and the consequences of sexual violence in domestic work, (c) build and strengthen participants' skills in acknowledging sexual violence and handling situations of disclosure of sexual abuse or exhibition of warning signs, (e) build participants' capacity to plan, conduct and evaluate training on sexual violence victimization at domestic work as well as capacity to produce plans of action and mechanisms for a follow-up.

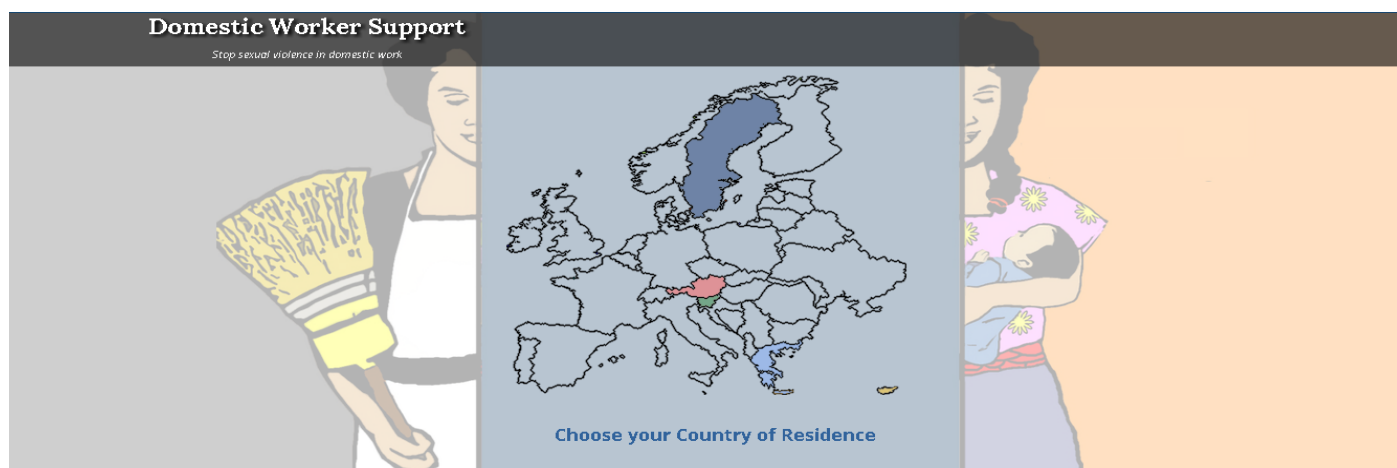
A DELPHI process involving a group of international experts in the fields of sexual violence and migrant health was employed to reach consensus on the training components. The train-the-trainer programme was successfully delivered to 10 community members drawn from migrant communities, public services, NGOs and community groups in each partner country (Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Austria and Slovenia) with the aim to test its feasibility, practicality and efficacy in increasing the knowledge and the capacity of the participants. The train-the-trainer Manual is now available in the local languages of the partner countries and some predominant migrant languages in each partner country and is accessible through the project website (<https://www.teicrete.gr/CommunAid/>).



The COMMUNAID train-the-trainer programme in Heraklion Greece, October 2014

Translating the needs of sexually victimized female migrants into services

The COMMUN-AID web tool



www.domesticworkersupport.info

A web tool, tailor-made to the victims' needs, was developed within the tasks of the COMMUN-AID project, offering up-to-date information about safe accommodation options, referral to relevant agencies, essentials of law of the partner countries, an overview of rights and how to protect them, risk avoidance and crisis management techniques, and emergency contact information and procedures. A small group of sexually victimized female migrant domestic workers was involved in the cultural adaptation process in each partner country. The tool safeguards female migrants' anonymity, has unique cultural perspectives and is available in 14 languages, those of the most prevalent migrant communities in the partner countries.



Recommendations for the prevention and management of sexual violence in domestic work

A set of recommendations was developed within the COMMUN-AID project with the aim to support policy makers in the prevention and management of sexual violence against female migrant domestic workers. The recommendations are organized under five main domains as follows:

Empowerment of female migrant domestic workers

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

Formal support following sexual violence

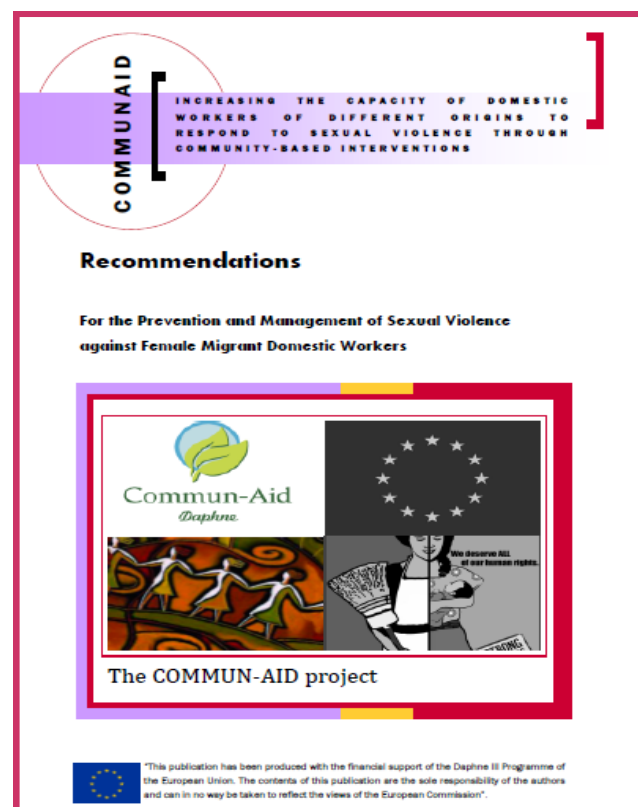
These recommendations focus on the governmental and non-governmental support or care offered to victims of sexual violence at domestic work and aim to improve the quality of service provision through increasing the overall capacity of the existing services to deal with the migrant domestic worker population as well as through introducing migrant-friendly approaches and procedures.

Labour regulations and legislation

These recommendations aim to improve the working conditions surrounding domestic work by acknowledging the special attributes that characterize women who are employed in this sector.

Public awareness

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



Research and monitoring

These 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.

The full set of recommendations is accessible through the project website (<https://www.teicrete.gr/CommunAid/>) and will be distributed to stakeholders engaged in the prevention and management of sexual violence against female migrants both in the partner countries and at European level.

Disseminating the COMMUN-AID project's outcomes and products

Regional workshops were held in Cyprus, Greece, Sweden and Slovenia with the aim to communicate the project's outcomes to key stakeholders and facilitate a dialogue on how to adapt the theoretical knowledge gained through the project into practice.

The COMMUN-AID workshops were attended by a wide range of stakeholders in the partner countries, including policy makers, governmental bodies, professional organizations, health promotion bodies, educational authorities, mass media and lay persons.



Workshop in Ljubljana Slovenia, December 4, 2014



Workshop in Heraklion Greece, November 6-7, 2014



Workshop in Nicosia Cyprus, September 28, 2014



The COMMUN-AID presented on TV in Greece

November 4, 2014



COMMUN-AID workshop in Heraklion Greece,

March 21, 2014

Scientific dissemination

- ◆ **5th (EUPHA) European Conference on Migrant and Ethnic Minority Health and Health care in the Context of the Current Systematic Crisis in Europe** on 10th - 12th April, 2014, Granada, Spain.
- ◆ **19th International Conference of the A.P.P.A.C Association of Psychology & Psychiatry for Adults & Children Congress Series 9: Recent Advances in Neuropsychiatric Psychological and social Sciences**, 13-16 May 2014, Athens, Greece.
- ◆ **22nd International Congress IACCP International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology**. "Diversity Equality and culture", 15-19 July 2014, Reims, France.
- ◆ **5th National Conference on Counseling Psychology: Current trends, future orientations**. The Division of Counseling of Greek Psychological Association (Hellenic Psychological Society), 6-9 November 2014, Patra, Greece.
- ◆ **5th National Conference of the Forum of Public Health & Community Medicine**, 21-23 November 2014, Thessaloniki, Greece.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Laboratory of Health and Road Safety, Department of Social Work

Technological Educational Institute of Crete, Greece

Address: Estavromenos Street, Heraklion Crete, P.C. 71004, Greece

Phone: +30 (2810) 379516, +30 (2810) 379514, E-mail: daphne@staff.teicrete.gr

Website: www.teicrete.gr/CommunAid/

COMMUNAID PROJECT PARTNERS



TECHNOLOGICAL
EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF CRETE



THE LABORATORY OF HEALTH AND ROAD SAFETY



Stockholms
universitet



RutgersWPF



This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Daphne III Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission