

# ENDING THE CYCLE:

## Insights and Strategies to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence in the Kyrgyz Republic

Research report on the quality of preventive measures and services available for survivors of gender-based violence in the Kyrgyz Republic



Bishkek  
2023

## List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	— Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women
CC	— Crisis Center
CSO	— Civil Society Organization
DV	— Domestic Violence
FHI 360	— Family Health International 360
FAO	— Food and Agriculture Organization
FLAC	— Free Legal Aid Center
FLAS	— Free Legal Assistance Services
GBV	— Gender-based violence
KR	— Kyrgyz Republic
KII	— Key Informant Interview
LCPPDV	— Local Committees for the Protection and Prevention from Domestic Violence
LAT	— Legal Assessment Tool
MoJ	— Ministry of Justice
MLSWM	— Ministry of Labor, Social Welfare and Migration
NAP	— National Action Plan
ODARA	— The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment
SI	— Structured Interview
SOP	— Standard Operating Procedures
SGBV	— Sexual and Gender-based violence
SSPO	— State Social Procurement Order
UNODC	— United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

# GBV IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## A SNAPSHOT

### GBV RELATED CRIMES (2020)



### TYPES OF PUNISHMENT FOR GENDER-BASED CRIMES

**84** PEOPLE CONVICTED

FOR GENDER-RELATED CRIMES IN 2020

**58** persons  
Prison sentence

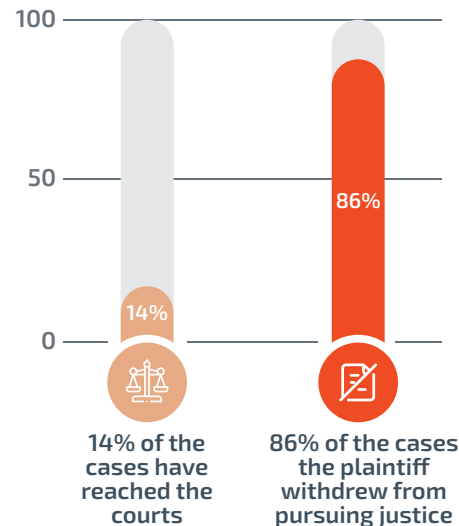
**1** person  
Life sentence

**2** persons  
Compensation

**21** persons  
Released under probation

**2** persons  
Community service

### ANALYSIS OF COURT CASES RELATED TO GENDER-BASED CRIMES (2020)



# GBV IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## A SNAPSHOT

### SURVIVOR SERVICES IN 2022

OUT OF

**9959**

PEOPLE SOUGHT HELP AT AKSAKAL  
COURTS AND CRISIS CENTERS

Men



828

Women



9131

**809**

people  
sought help at

**541**

Aksakal courts



**9053**

people  
sought help at

**19**

Crisis centers



**80**

people sought help  
at charity and public  
funds



**17**

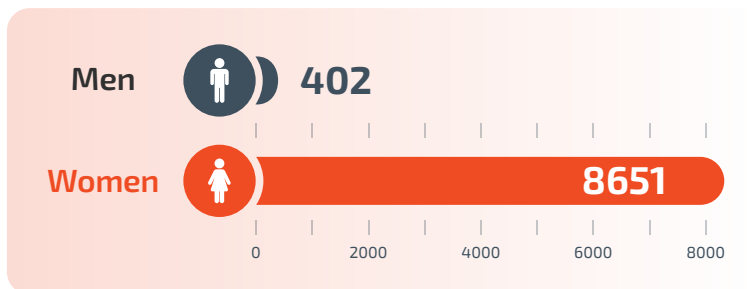
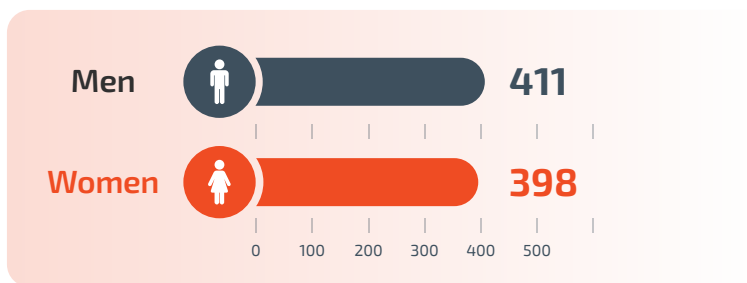
people sought help  
at other  
services



# GBV IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## A SNAPSHOT

### SURVIVOR SERVICES IN 2022



# GBV IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## A SNAPSHOT

### SURVIVOR SERVICES IN 2022

Out of

**80**

people seeking help  
at charity and public  
funds



Men



8

Women



72

0 50 100

Out of

**17**

people seeking help  
at other services



Men



7

Women



10

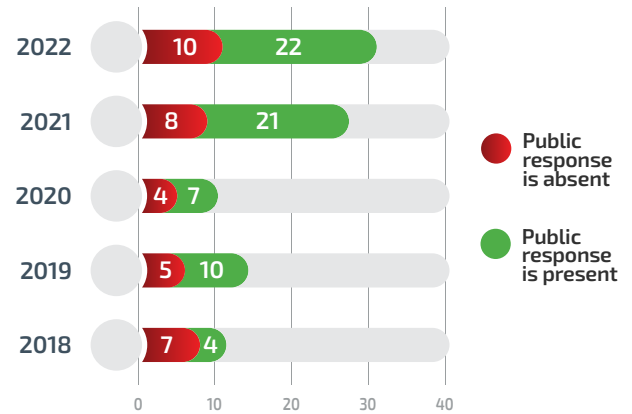
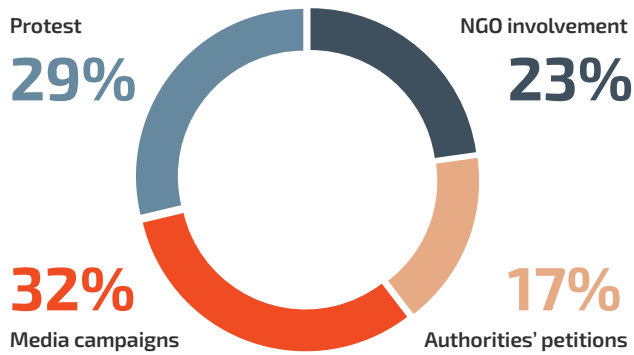
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# GBV IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

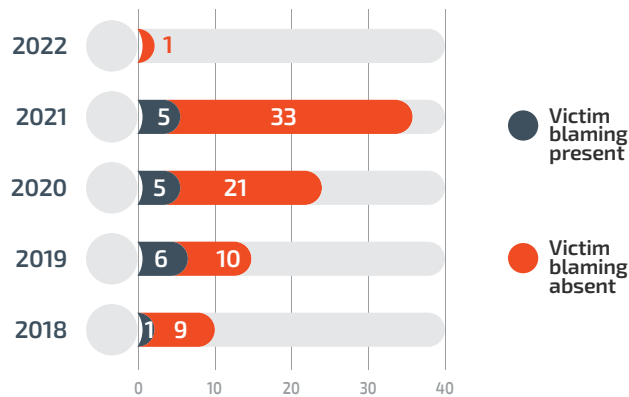
## A SNAPSHOT

### MEDIA COVERAGE ON GBV (2018-2022)

#### PUBLIC REACTION



#### VICTIM BLAMING



The data on GBV media coverage (2018-2022) is extracted from discourse analysis of the top five media sources, forming a crucial part of the current research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study on the Quality of Prevention Efforts and Services Available to Survivors of Gender-based Violence (GBV) in the Kyrgyz Republic, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Jigerduu Jarandar (Active Communities) project and conducted by PIL Research company, is a comprehensive survey and assessment of services related to gender-based violence (GBV) in the Kyrgyz Republic. This summary report presents the study's key findings and recommendations for how stakeholders can improve prevention and response to GBV.

For change to be effective, it must be evidence-based. The scale of GBV is well-documented in the Kyrgyz Republic, including analyses of law enforcement and judicial practices, but there's a notable gap in the study of the social, cultural, economic, and legal systems that perpetuate the problem. This study addresses that gap, offering key recommendations for collaborative efforts by government, civil society, and the donor community to enhance the entire continuum of care.

The study explores the strengths and weaknesses of the legal framework around GBV; the alignment of judicial systems with regulatory provision; gaps in service provision; socio cultural and structural barriers to survivors accessing services; the effectiveness of preventive measures; and the social norms and media discourse that perpetuate GBV. Using a cross-sectional, mixed-methods strategy, researchers collected primary quantitative and qualitative data from individuals working to address GBV and those affected by it. Researchers also conducted secondary data reviews of legislation and law enforcement (judicial) practices and media coverage of GBV.

The findings reveal that legislative weaknesses lead to differing interpretations of the law, gaps in service provision and misalignment between legislative provision and delivery of services on the ground. Further barriers

to effective services include a lack of standard operating procedures across the continuum of care, harmful social norms, insufficient funding, weak monitoring and evaluation and low levels of awareness-raising activities. Analysis of law enforcement practice and the review of Kyrgyz court practice for gender crimes from 2021-2022 found that legal provisions for probation and reconciliation of the parties allow perpetrators to escape fair justice and force victims to return to dangerous domestic situations.

Based on these findings PIL Research offers a comprehensive set of recommendations for each stage of the care continuum (Section 3 of this report). This provides government, civil society and donor organizations with a roadmap for a more harmonized response to GBV in the Kyrgyz Republic.





## Strengthening legislation and regulatory frameworks

Key recommendations for better legislation focus on eliminating harmful elements of the existing legal framework and establishing new provisions for better protection of victims, including children. Priorities are:



Ending the possibility of reconciliation of the parties in cases of serious harm and trauma



Establishing a minimum age of sexual consent



Strengthening the regulation of Protective Orders to isolate perpetrators from their victims

Currently, regulatory acts allocate responsibility for GBV prevention to different providers. Uniform regulatory definitions will eliminate this confusion and support more cohesive prevention activities.

## Standardizing and improving service delivery

Recommendations are made for how the government can standardize and harmonize referral mechanisms and service delivery with new operating procedure guidelines for a more seamless response to GBV. A new national minimum standard should ensure support services adopt a victim-centered approach, including principles of non-discrimination and do-no-harm. Developing inclusive programs according to the needs of different groups of survivors, will address the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities, and children.

The study calls for increased, more transparent funding across all services and new mechanisms for stronger government oversight, data collection and accountability. This will standardize the quality of activities at every stage of care continuum and allow for evidence-based decision making in the future.

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## Addressing harmful social norms

Current public appetite for more action to tackle GBV, driven by high-profile cases of violence against women and girls, presents a unique opportunity to challenge patriarchal norms, promote gender equality and encourage zero tolerance of GBV. Communication campaigns, led by government agencies, with the support of civil society and the donor community, can respond to this demand.

The level of detail provided in this report presents stakeholders, policy-makers and all interested parties with a unique opportunity to reform institutional mechanisms for better service delivery and to stem the rising tide of gender-based violence in the Kyrgyz Republic.

## INTRODUCTION

The legal framework for addressing GBV in the Kyrgyz Republic aligns with international human rights treaties and the Government has made a series of international commitments to combat GBV, including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW). Prevention and protection from GBV is stipulated in the national Constitution, criminal laws, national policies and strategies on gender equality and human rights protection.

Additionally, initiatives have been launched at both governance and service provision level, including National Gender Action Plans (NAPs) in 2015-2017 and 2018-2020, as well as ongoing initiatives to refine the NAP for 2021-2030 and the National Action Plan on Crime Prevention for 2023-2027, which will include provisions for GBV.

Recent policy reforms reflect commitment by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to strengthening the country's approach to GBV and resolving the legislative and institutional gaps that prevent survivors from accessing quality services and perpetrators from receiving justice.

In October 2022, a package of amendments to various legislative acts relating to protection from domestic, sexual and gender-based violence ("On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts in the Field of Protection from Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence" henceforth referred to as "GBV legislation reforms") was initiated by a Member of Parliament. On November 15, 2023 it passed the first hearing with the full support of Parliament.

Despite these achievements, the number of registered gender crimes is increasing and survivors of violence face barriers to services at all stages of their recovery and pursuit of justice. In order for future changes to be effective, they must be evidence-based but until now there has been a lack of comprehensive and critical study of the social, cultural, economic, and legal systems that perpetuate GBV in the Kyrgyz Republic. This study closes that gap and makes key recommendations for how the Government, civil society and the donor community can continue to work together to improve every stage of the continuum of care.



## METHODOLOGY

The emergence of GBV is examined through the lens of an ecosystemic model of interactions between social norms that create an environment for the acceptance and/or

justification of GBV, as well as relationship factors at the individual, community, or policy levels that amplify a person's risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator.

### Theoretical framework

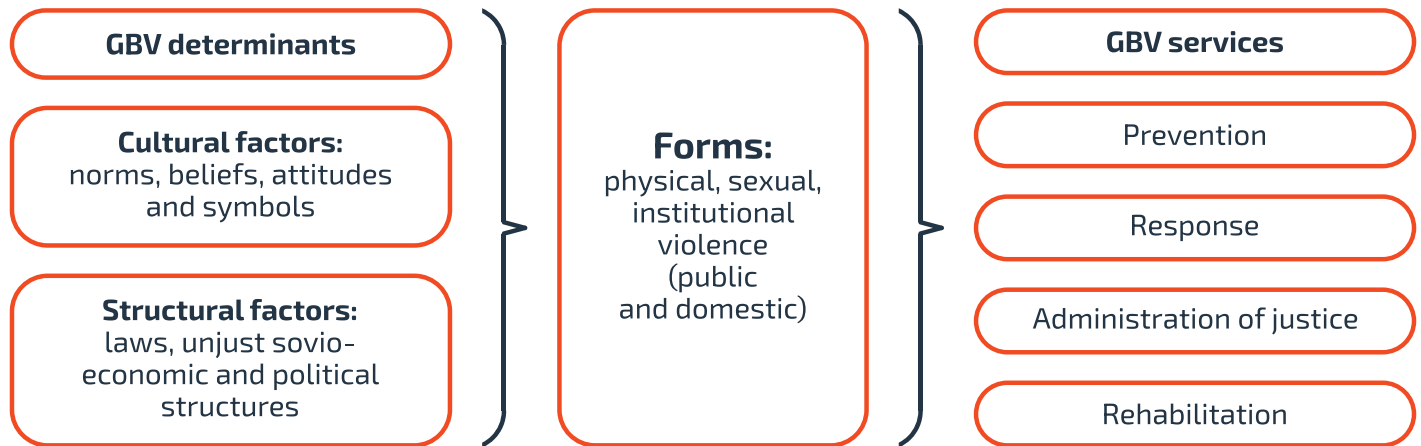
The study is based on three methodological approaches (see figure 1) that define the phenomenon of gender-based violence and practices to combat it:

- 1** Galtung's Theory of Violence (1969) allows us to understand the causes and mechanisms of the emergence of violence. It is based on the distinction between direct and indirect violence, where direct violence is what we can see and experience, and indirect violence includes structural and cultural factors. Structural factors include laws and institutions that contribute to violence in economic institutions such as the market, social relationships, religious institutions, and armed forces. Structural violence describes a situation where the social structure or institutions in which people operate function in a way that violates the rights or opportunities of specific groups or individuals. Thus, Galtung notes that when a husband beats his wife, it is individual violence, but when a million husbands beat a million wives, it becomes structural. Cultural factors are related to dominant views and beliefs used to legitimize violence. According to Galtung's theory of violence, structural and cultural causes of violence reinforce and amplify each other, forming and strengthening the possibility of direct manifestations of violence.

**2** The Social-Ecological Model (Dahlberg and Krug, 2002) helps to understand the complexity of factors contributing to gender-based violence and the complex interrelationships between stakeholders in violence prevention: society, communities, interpersonal relationships, and individuals.

**3** The concept of a continuum of care recognizes that combating gender-based violence is a long-term process and requires integrated and systematic support for survivors. This can include legal assistance, medical care, psychological support, access to shelters, access to justice, and other services necessary for health recovery and normal life. At each stage of assistance, specific providers offer services, and the continuum of care includes at least four stages — prevention, response, administration of justice and rehabilitation (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Consolidated study conceptual framework



To examine the national system for combating gender violence as a continuum of care, the research team identified key mechanisms and institutions that implement state policy for protection against GBV at each stage of the continuum of care. There are 12 key

institutional mechanisms, which are clustered into four conditional groups based on their functions in countering domestic violence: mechanisms for (1) prevention, (2) response, (3) execution of justice, and (4) rehabilitation

Table 1. Continuum of care in response to gender-based violence and corresponding institutional structures and mechanisms in the Kyrgyz Republic

Continuum of care	Institutional Mechanisms
<b>Prevention of GBV</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aksakal Courts</li> <li>2. Local Committees for the Protection and Prevention of Domestic Violence (LCPPDV)</li> <li>3. Institution of State Social Procurement Order (SSPO)</li> <li>4. Information and education centers for prevention of gender-based violence*</li> </ol>
<b>Response to GBV</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Protective orders</li> <li>6. Crisis centers and shelters</li> <li>7. Pro bono legal aid</li> <li>8. State guaranteed legal assistance</li> <li>9. Referral mechanism and inter-institutional coordination</li> </ol>
<b>Administration of justice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Procedures for judicial review, mechanisms for protection of victims and witnesses</li> <li>11. Institute of probation</li> </ol>
<b>Rehabilitation of offenders</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Correctional programs</li> </ol>

\* Kyrgyz Republic has no such centers; the functions of these centers are partially performed by other institutions.

The continuum of care model determines the scope and selection of research participants for detailed assessment of the mechanisms through which services are delivered.

It provides a framework for deeper analysis of the issues outlined in the following six key study questions:

1. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of the legal framework in preventing GBV, protection, and prosecution, compared to standard international policies and protocols?**
2. **Do judicial systems and practices align with legislative and regulatory provisions?**
3. **What are the gaps in the provision of services to combat GBV (e.g., medical, legal, psychosocial services)?**
4. **What are the primary socio-cultural and structural barriers to clients accessing services, and service providers retaining clients? From the perspective of service providers, what are the specific obstacles to providing services to people from vulnerable groups, including minorities and people with disabilities?**
5. **How effective are preventive measures taken by crisis centers and community-level mechanisms in raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence and available resources for survivors? How are the special needs of vulnerable groups met?**
6. **What are the main social norms and media discourses that support (or counter) GBV, and how are they created and manifested in public spheres?**

The study employed a cross-sectional mixed method design including desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs) with 28 national stakeholders, and structured interviews (SI) with 121 representatives of service providers and 10 clients of crisis centers and Local Committees for the Protection and Prevention of

Domestic Violence (LCPPDVs). The legislation analysis was conducted using the adapted Legal Assessment Tool (LAT) tool<sup>1</sup>. The study was conducted in Active Communities project areas in Bishkek and Osh cities and seven regions (Batken, Chui, Djalal-Abad, Issyk-Kul, Osh, Naryn and Talas).

<sup>1</sup> The LAT tool, has been developed by FAO, was and adapted in this research for the purposes of this study.

FAO. (2014). *Driving change with the Legal Assessment Tool (LAT) for gender-equitable land tenure*. Official FAO website, <https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/legislation-assessment-tool/en/>. For the purposes of analysis, in accordance with the Guidelines of the UN Unified Program on basic services for women and girls who suffered violence (UNODC. *Package of basic services for women and girls who suffered violence: Fundamental elements and guidelines for ensuring quality*. Official UNODC website, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/ESP-AllInOne-RU-WEB.pdf>), 8 criteria were singled out in accordance with the international standards of the state basic measures for protection from gender-based violence

## SECTION 1: KEY FINDINGS FOR STUDY QUESTIONS

### 1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the legal framework in preventing GBV, protection, and prosecution, compared to standard international policies and protocols?

The Kyrgyzstan Law “On Protection and Prevention of Domestic Violence,” mandates 17 agencies to protect citizens from domestic violence and establishes a requirement for inter-agency coordination and interaction. It does not provide clear mechanisms for how these functions should be fulfilled. At the national level, special structures have been established to provide key prevention and response services, the administration of justice, and rehabilitation.

However, implementation of this legislative framework is weak, largely due to a lack of fit-for-purpose standard operating procedures (SOPs) for needs-assessment, service delivery and impact analysis, and a lack of analysis of law enforcement and judicial practices. A review of court practice in relation to GBV cases carried out for this study revealed weak points in the legal framework including the implementation of progressive provisions. Protective orders do not work de facto as an effective mechanism for protection from violence, and only 14% of cases from pre-trial proceedings go to court.

The majority of cases are closed due to reconciliation of parties, as cultural pressure and a lack of effective, implementable punishments drives women to reconcile with the perpetrator.



### 2. Do judicial systems and practices align with legislative and regulatory provisions?

There is a widespread pattern of exclusion of certain forms of GBV in judicial practice. In Kyrgyz criminal law more than 15 crimes, ranging from forced marriage to petty hooliganism, have features of GBV, but GBV per se is not provided for. There is also evidence of inconsistencies between pieces of legislation. For example, a criminal case for violating marriage age laws (i.e. forcing a minor into marriage) is a matter of private-public prosecution and the investigation begins only when the victim or their legal representative files a complaint, often making parents both complainant and defendant.

An analysis of legislation using the legal assessment tool (LAT) identified efforts to address this issue such as the creation of standard operating procedures, but these are rarely adhered to. Desk review and analysis of law enforcement and court practices from randomly selected GBV cases that are available through open access of the Supreme Courts databases for 2021-2022 revealed that the right of victims and witnesses to give depositions during pre-trial proceedings is rarely implemented, and women are frequently forced to undergo multiple interrogations, including giving testimony in court in the presence of the person who committed the violence.

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Changes in criminal legislation have made it more difficult to hold those guilty of domestic violence accountable. A lack of means to isolate the aggressor, even temporarily, places victims in an even more vulnerable situation. The “Law on the Protection and Prevention against Domestic Violence”<sup>2</sup> allows for victims of domestic violence to be placed in state or municipal shelters for temporary residence, but with only one shelter operational spaces

are severely limited. The mandatory requirement for all individuals who have committed violence and have been granted an extended protective order to complete a correctional program is also often impossible to fulfill due to geographic distance from organizations that provide correctional training.

### **3. What are the gaps in the provision of services to combat GBV (e.g., medical, legal, psychosocial services)?**

At the municipal level the first state-run crisis center (CC) for women who suffer GBV has opened in Bishkek: “Ayalzat CC” has 60 places, accepts women and their children, and provides comprehensive care to survivors. Public Association NurJolBer in Naryn region is assisting local authorities to open the first rural crisis center in Chaek Municipality of Zhungal District. It will provide comprehensive psychological, social and legal services and four temporary accommodation places. A further ten crisis centers are run by CSOs across the country. At the local level, structures have been established to engage local communities in protection and prevention, especially through Local Committees for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

When victims of domestic violence do seek help they are able to access free basic medical care through health facilities and crisis centers or shelters. In addition to healthcare, these facilities also provide services such as temporary housing, food, essential items such as clothing and assistance in obtaining psychological, legal, and medical consultations. However, the availability of GBV specialist staff (social workers, psychologists, and lawyers) is limited and funding is limited and unstable

(Active Communities monitoring suggests state funding covers a small proportion of the total Crisis Center budget, with most costs currently covered by donor support). The result is that services cannot be offered consistently. A lack of standard operating procedures, and weak documentation practices are further barriers to providing the desired range and quality of services.

Analysis of the structured interviews with pro bono lawyers revealed that legal consultation and qualified legal assistance provided by free legal assistance services (FLAS) are characterized by the following problems: low-quality interaction between the FLAS lawyers and the recipients of legal aid (clients reported that they had not received information related to the referral system); a lack of standard procedures for receiving specific types of services; lawyers not adhering to the duty schedule and not wanting to consider the client's opinion (e.g. when scheduling meetings); and, occasionally, inaccessibility of FLAS offices at local levels. Information about pro bono lawyers is almost nonexistent in local communities, and the effectiveness of the services they provide is not evaluated.

<sup>2</sup> 2017 Law “On Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence”, dated April 27, 2017, No. 63. The family violence law includes measures to improve protection for victims of domestic violence including police and judicial response.



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#### 4. What are the primary socio-cultural and structural barriers to clients accessing services, and service providers retaining clients? From the perspective of service providers, what are the specific obstacles to providing services to people from vulnerable groups, including minorities and people with disabilities?

The primary duty of the State is to enforce the rights of women and protect them against violence and abuse. However, interviews conducted for this study reveal that some state employees, tasked with preventing and providing protection against violence, conform to social norms and have not received adequate training on how to handle GBV cases.

Representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) reported that patriarchal social norms guiding employees of state and municipal bodies responsible for policies related to protection against GBV are a significant barrier to effective services. Adherence to social norms limits survivors' access to criminal justice systems and diminishes the essential principle of justice – inevitability of punishment. Desk analysis and analysis of in-depth interviews with women who have suffered GBV, semi-structured interviews with representatives of state structures and CSOs working on prevention and prosecution of GBV, and structured interviews with Aksakal Court representatives, LCPPDV representatives, and pro bono lawyers revealed a prevalence of discriminatory practices by service providers against GBV victims. For example, lawyers start working only with clients who have received "victim status" (after a

resolution is issued by an investigating officer). When cases reach court, patriarchal, discriminatory cultural norms put victims of violence under pressure to drop charges and reconcile with the offender, using the legal provision for "Reconciliation of the Parties". This violates the right to a fair trial and serves as a basis for cultural violence and the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. As a result of these socio-cultural and structural barriers, victims are unable to exercise their right to obtain or renew a protective order, undergo medical-psychological examinations, receive qualified legal assistance, or access quality services.



#### 5. How effective are preventive measures taken by crisis centers and community-level mechanisms in raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence and available resources for survivors? How are the special needs of vulnerable groups met?

Civil society organizations (CSOs) with international support (including crisis centers) are currently making the largest contribution to raising public awareness of GBV. A small number of CSOs working at the local level are largely focused on providing general education in schools and universities, which may yield delayed impact through the transformation of gender norms among

young people. Documentation and impact assessments of best practices are historically insufficient across the country.

Desk review and analysis of in-depth interview with women who suffered from GBV, semi-structured interviews with representatives of state structures

and CSOs working on prevention and prosecution of GBV, and structured interviews with Aksakal Court representatives, LCPPDV representatives, and pro bono lawyers revealed that the state is weak in fulfilling tasks related to the prevention of GBV. Systems for informing local communities about GBV and state policy for protection against violence are not fully developed at either the national or local level. However, government bodies are mandated with this function and could make a significant contribution to increasing awareness. For

example, the Republican Center for Health Promotion and Mass Communication has departments focused on community outreach, mass communication, and behavioral and cultural factors. Currently, these structures operate primarily in the realm of disease prevention and health promotion, and they have successful social strategies for combating smoking. Incorporating GBV protection issues into the functions of medical units would be a positive step towards better prevention.

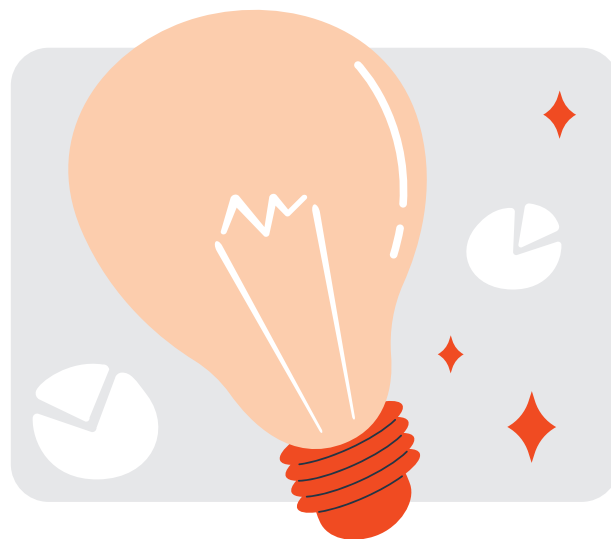
## **6. What are the main social norms and media discourses that support (or counter) GBV, and how are they created and manifested in public spaces?**

Analysis reveals that coverage of GBV in the mainstream media is characterized by stereotypes and discriminatory language. Headlines of articles about gender-based crimes are often sensationalized 'clickbait'. With the exception of targeted information campaigns commissioned by donor organizations, the media does not promote a discourse of zero tolerance towards gender-based violence (GBV), thereby reflecting and perpetuating the cycle of violence.

organizations are providing assistance in protection against gender violence, indicating that survivors of violence have places to turn for help.

Although the 2030 National Gender Strategy and the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for 2022–2024 identify the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy as the responsible body for implementing measures of state gender policy in the information space, this mandate does not appear in the Ministry's departmental regulations.

Analyses from 2017 to 2022 show a positive trend of fewer publications stigmatizing or victim-blaming gender violence victims. Additionally, there is an increase in the volume of publications within the frameworks of public and state institutions. This means that publications are increasingly reporting that various state and public



## SECTION 2:

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MECHANISMS ACROSS THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

To assess national systems for addressing gender-based violence as a comprehensive care continuum, the research team identified the mechanisms and institutions implementing state policies aimed at safeguarding against GBV at each stage of this continuum. Twelve key

institutional mechanisms were identified, categorized into four distinct groups: (1) institutional mechanisms for prevention, (2) institutional mechanisms for response, (3) institutional mechanisms for justice, and (4) institutional mechanisms for rehabilitation.

## 1 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR PREVENTION

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic does not monitor the preventive work of state and municipal bodies within the framework of interdepartmental coordination and most departments have no authorized internal structures for the prevention of GBV. International standards for basic services for the prevention of GBV include structures responsible for information and educational activities. In the Kyrgyz Republic, responsibility is assumed “within the functional limits” of the relevant departments: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and others. The main work on information and educational prevention measures is carried out by CSOs and local organizations within the framework of projects and programs, which leads to fragmented activities. The effectiveness of such activities is limited by campaign “reach” indicators. The study reveals differences in understanding among

service providers of effective strategies for addressing GBV: employees of the internal affairs department and the social protection system see the solution in strengthening preventive work among the population, civil activists prioritize increased awareness of access to services for victims of violence, representatives of Aksakal Courts pursue reconciliation of the parties, and representatives of local self-government are focused on the long-term problems of providing victims of violence with services such as safe housing and access to income-generating activities.

### Aksakal Courts

Despite the relatively long history of this community-based institution in the Kyrgyz Republic, regulation of Aksakal courts is limited and their decisions can be appealed in district or city courts. One of the three main tasks of Aksakal Courts, as defined by law, is “assisting in enforcing legality and law and order, and preventing legal violations in the territory of rural municipalities and cities” (Art.3. “Main tasks of Aksakal Courts”). However,

this research found that Aksakal Court members are not inclined to cooperate with representatives of crisis centers on issues related to the prevention of and response to GBV. Only a third of respondents (33%) recognize crisis centers as partners in work to protect against violence. Respondents are more likely to consider local authorities, police, and social workers as partners in combating GBV; slightly fewer see the media and medical

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workers as partners. Focus group discussions with men and women in the Chui, Issyk-Kul, and Jalal-Abad regions showed that they are mostly skeptical about the Aksakal

Court's activities in responding to GBV<sup>3</sup>, and no one had ever heard of any preventive activities.

## Local Committees for Protection and Prevention of Domestic Violence (LCPPDVs)

LCPPDVs represent a “permanently operating collegial body established on volunteer principles from representatives of government agencies, members of the local community, and representatives of civil society for interaction and cooperation on issues of preventing domestic violence, violation of the rights of women, children, the elderly, and incapacitated citizens. The main goal of the committee is to assist in preventing violence in the family and violations of the rights of women and girls in the family.”<sup>4</sup>

Research reveals a series of barriers preventing LCPPDVs from fulfilling this goal, including a lack of clear channels for communities to report warning signs or incidents, or for committee members to document alerts. Many LCPPDVs take a “reactive” position stating that there are no known cases of domestic violence in their communities, and therefore no reason for the LCPPDV to

work “yet.” LCPPDVs have no system for monitoring and evaluation of their activities. 80% of respondents were not able to substantiate evaluations of their activities adequately.

Information materials for community education differ across regions and awareness-raising measures are not responsive to identified risk factors. More than 80% of activities declared by committee members were conducted in local schools, primarily targeting high school students and, to a lesser extent, their parents.

Although more than 70% of the surveyed LCPPDV members reported that they had participated in training on the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), 50% reported insufficient understanding of how to handle GBV cases.

## Information and Education Centers

In the system of a comprehensive socio-ecological model of the GBV phenomenon, international standards emphasize the key role of information and education centers as centers for GBV prevention in society. In Kyrgyzstan, these centers do not exist. Formally, the functions of informing the population about GBV are assigned to the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth, and state media, but this mandate is not reflected in the ministry's departmental guidelines and discourse analysis reveals that coverage of GBV in the

mainstream media is characterized by stereotypes and discriminatory language. The expert community and civil society organizations have developed numerous training modules on gender-sensitive journalism, for both media employees and teachers and students of journalism schools. However, employees of state media institutions and the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Tourism of Kyrgyzstan have not been fully integrated into mechanisms for preventing gender-based violence.

<sup>3</sup> Men in the Chui Region, discussing the real case of a young woman raped by a neighbor, for example, noted that the woman is afraid to go to the Aksakal Court that may make decisions based on the tradition of “blood for blood,” which will become a serious problem for her family.

<sup>4</sup> MLSWM of the Kyrgyz Republic (2021). Model Regulations on the Local Committee for the Protection and Prevention of Domestic Violence. <https://mlsp.gov.kg/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/tipovoe-polozhenie.pdf>

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## State Social Procurement Orders (SSPOs)

SSPOs are the government tender process by which social services may be outsourced to CSOs and other non-government providers. Since the adoption of the Law on State Social Procurement Order in 2017 significant progress has been made in regulating outsourcing of services, organization of project bids for service provision, and allocation of state social contracts to CSOs. However, much activity relating to service-provision remains unregulated. For example, some of the services procured by state social orders, including crisis centers, shelter, do not have corresponding state standards and are not even included in the registry of state services.

Between 2019 and 2022, 14% of all funded State Social Procurement Order (SSPO) projects were aimed at the prevention/response to gender-based violence and sexual violence. According to the Ministry of Labor, Social Welfare, and Migration through the SSPO over the past five years, funding has increased from 5.4 million soms to 7 million soms annually. The funding is directed towards supporting shelters and correctional programs.

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR RESPONSE

Across all response mechanisms, nearly a third of respondents believe that existing standard operating procedures (SOPs) do not meet requirements – standards are adopted without adequate verification and are not revised to improve efficiency. Almost all aspects regulated by SOPs (role of entities, mechanisms for referrals to specialists at national and local levels, documentation of redirection, standardization of compensation) are primarily assessed as poorly developed.

Ensuring monitoring and evaluation of coordination at national and local levels appears to be a weak link in the fight against GBV. The performance of entire institutions is not measured, often the effectiveness of implemented measures is immeasurable due to the lack of developed indicators. Even where there are fragmented indicators for performance and quality of services, they do not influence the professional careers or remuneration of service providers, so management across response services is not results-oriented.

### Protective Orders

In legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, the formulation of protective order conditions, where the perpetrator is prohibited from having direct or indirect contact with the victim of domestic violence, appears problematic because it does not provide a mechanism for isolating the perpetrator. Typically, social norms dictate that the home is the property of the man, and it is culturally unacceptable for men to leave the home, even temporarily. Therefore, perpetrators often return to their usual place of residence

and most commonly re-assault the woman for filing a complaint.

In a sample of 200 court cases from 2021 and 2022 related to gender crimes, not a single procedural decision mentioned previously issued protective orders, even though 14 victims testified in court about enduring long-term, systematic violence.

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## Crisis Centers and Shelters

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the activities of shelters are regulated by provisions for guaranteed social services. Shelters, as social service institutions and recipients of state social orders, can obtain state accreditation on a voluntary basis. However, shelters for women are not included in the registry of state and municipal services, which is critical for standardization and access to State Social Procurement Orders. There are no regional (Central Asia), national, or network standards for the number of places per capita.

In 2018, at the initiative of the Association of Crisis Centers in the Kyrgyz Republic, the Center for Standardization and Metrology under the Ministry of Economy of Kyrgyzstan adopted a National Standard applicable to social services provided to women in advisory and preventive centers (crisis centers), regardless of the form of ownership. This standard sets the volume, forms, conditions, and procedures for providing a minimum set of social services, including temporary housing, in crisis centers for women who have been subjected to domestic violence, physical, psychological, sexual violence, or who find themselves in a difficult life situation, have suffered from human trafficking, or conditions similar to slavery. Thus, the scope of the standard is quite broad and the document does not contain features specific to specialized shelters for women who've experienced GBV.

A large number of children, including newborns, live in the shelters with their mothers, but organizations do not have the required resources (children's playgrounds,

specialized programs, professionals, etc.), and the issue of accommodating women with children is not covered in the national standard. None of the shelters have programs for women and girls with disabilities.

The result is that shelters operate according to varying regulations. In some crisis centers, there are unwritten norms of limitation and stigmatization of those who seek help. For example, clients cannot be admitted twice; some operate "blacklists," and certain categories of people seeking help are stigmatized. In many cases, shelter activities are poorly documented.

The shelter management structure is usually built on a project-by-project basis to accommodate support from different sources and to allow flexibility with staff recruitment. This means that management functions, including planning, coordination, motivation, and control, are determined by the goals of the specific, often short-term, project rather than the shelter's strategic development goals. Under these conditions, it is difficult to establish internal systems for tracking the quality of work and services. Virtually all surveyed organizations use monitoring tools from project to project. It is therefore not surprising that financial management is nascent and most shelters do not have a defined budget. Workers and specialists usually work in the shelter or crisis center as well as another organization and only one crisis center/shelter reported being close to the "gold standard" of financial independence.

## Guaranteed State Legal Aid and Pro Bono Assistance

A government service, known as the Free Legal Aid Service (FLAS) within the Ministry of Justice, providing free access to legal assistance, was founded in 2009, after the adoption of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On State Guaranteed Legal Assistance" (FLAC Law). The law was

restricted to criminal cases, which excluded the majority of GBV cases. In 2022, the Law was comprehensively revised and a mechanism was introduced to allow eligible individuals to receive qualified legal assistance in civil and administrative matters as well as criminal cases.

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However, additional assistance is required to establish the mechanisms and procedures necessary for effective implementation of the law.

The state has a responsibility to ensure the professional competence of legal aid providers. According to the Law on the Bar (Advokatura) of the Kyrgyz Republic, the state-authorized body accredits providers: legal activity is licensed based on a qualification exam, and there is a mechanism for revocation or termination of the license (although not in response to poor quality of the activity or low levels of client satisfaction.) Training is carried out solely with the support of CSOs; the Council of Advocates and its Training Center do not have publicly available training plans or education programs and there is no information on the assessment of training needs.

In 2017, the Council of Lawyers of the Kyrgyz Republic approved quality standards for lawyers providing qualified legal assistance in criminal cases and civil and administrative matters within the system of state-guaranteed legal aid. However, these standards lack algorithms related to assistance to women who are victims of violence. Nearly a third of attorneys surveyed believe that SOPs developed for responding to GBV are inadequate — standards are adopted without sufficient testing and are not revised to improve effectiveness. Almost all aspects regulated by SOPs (the role of subjects and referral mechanisms at the national and

local levels, documentation of referral, standardization of compensation, etc.) are assessed as generally poorly developed.

Pro bono lawyers and those from the state FLAS tend to have narrow specializations, however victims of violence often need comprehensive assistance.

A system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provided legal aid has not been established<sup>5</sup>. Previously, monitoring functions were performed by the Secretariat of the Coordination Center for State-Guaranteed Legal Aid, but since 2020, there has been virtually no civil monitoring of the activities of the Legal Aid Centers. There is therefore a general lack of data on the effectiveness of the activities of both state legal aid lawyers and pro bono lawyers, and no data on the results of pro bono cases related to GBV.

None of the interviewed respondents have handled cases involving victims of GBV. Nevertheless, information on the Association of Pro-Bono Lawyers' website indicated that more than 80% of cases are resolved in favor of clients who are victims of violence. Out of the total number of cases taken up by lawyers, more than 70% ended with a court decision in favor of the recipient of free legal aid.

*5 Various monitoring and assessment tools are outlined in the appendix detailing the developmental history of the Free Legal Aid System (FLAS). Among these instruments, we find distinctions such as an analysis of comprehensive data concerning the legal aid system. It includes an examination of the content of official documents prepared by individuals providing legal assistance. Furthermore, there is an evaluation of successful case studies, an analysis of complaints, and the monitoring of Civil Society Organisations).*

The Ministry of Justice, with support from Active Communities and civil society leaders, successfully advocated for the expansion of eligibility for free legal aid. The new law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid (adopted on August 10, 2022) expanded the categories of people eligible for qualified legal aid and legal consultations to include domestic violence victims, victims of human trafficking, refugees, stateless persons, foreigners, and persons whose identity is not/cannot be established; established a mechanism to grant eligible persons a qualified legal aid not only on criminal, but also civil and administrative cases, as well as for extra-judiciary cases; established clear rules related to financing and managing legal aid. The new Law also excluded discriminatory rules obliging a convicted person to reimburse legal aid costs.

One of the results of the legal aid reform is the establishment of the MoJ's Free Legal Aid Service (FLAS) which will be a core coordinating body of legal aid in Kyrgyzstan. Together with USAID's Ukuk Bulagy project and UNDP, Active Communities is supporting the newly established FLAS (formerly FLAC Institute) with institutional- and capacity-building, and awareness-raising about how to access free legal aid.

## Referral Mechanism

A referral system has been established at the national level, within a legal framework, which includes providers of basic services, including medical care, mental health and psychosocial support, protection and security, justice and legal assistance. However, there are gaps in the implementation of this mechanism, including:

- Differences in understanding among service providers about what constitutes prevention and response to GBV and effective implementation strategies.
- Unequal involvement in the referral system and responsibility for responding to GBV by policy actors as defined by legislation.
- Lack of a functioning monitoring and evaluation system, leading to declarative interaction between policy actors.
- An absence of SOPs for inter-regional and cross-sectoral referrals, which means crisis centers and shelters depend on their leaders' personal contacts.
- Weak internal knowledge exchange and management.
- According to a survey of pro-bono lawyers, clients are mainly referred to by acquaintances or colleagues. Cases of redirection from law enforcement agencies, Crisis Centers or other NGOs or local self-government bodies are rare.
- The influence of socio-cultural norms on service providers and survivors themselves, is an obstacle to the referral mechanism operating effectively. Living in a community where "everyone knows everyone" can make a survivor reluctant to seek help from relevant institutions and can also lead doctors to avoid formal registration of the patient in the "Registry of Citizen Complaints Regarding Incidents of Domestic Violence" or inform them about services for victims (protection orders, crisis centers, etc.), leading to potential repeated instances of violence.
- The providers of state services themselves acknowledge that there is inadequate monitoring of victims of violence after they have received services as municipal shelters.
- Services are not adequately publicized: most victims of violence surveyed in the study reported learning about shelters and crisis centers via "word of mouth" or social media.



## 3 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR JUSTICE

The process of automated integration and information exchange among key entities ensuring justice (Automated information system, Unified Register of Crimes and Misdemeanors, database of the Ministry of Internal Affairs) has not yet become a reality so departmental statistics are variable.

A comparison of national legislation and law enforcement practices with international standards of judicial justice, and protection mechanisms for victims and witnesses reveals a range of procedural weaknesses:

### Right to not testify in person:

Since 2019 victims of violence in the Kyrgyz Republic have had the right not to testify in court in person. Despite this, de facto courts usually insist on the presence of victims in court. This research also found that judges may be guided by gender stereotypes, demonstrate insufficient trust in the victim or impose a legal obligation to support the victim's statements with additional evidence, etc.

### The institution of reconciliation of the parties:

Rape and "Forcible Acts of a Sexual Nature" are classified as serious crimes, yet legislation provides for reconciliation of the parties even in these cases. The extensive use of the reconciliation mechanism leads to offenders' avoiding responsibility, which contradicts the principle of the inevitability of punishment and fosters a sense of impunity. Additionally, courts rarely provide a legal assessment or take into account testimony regarding the re-occurrence (systematic nature) of violence. 77% of lawyers surveyed believe that the main problem of access to justice for survivors of violence is cultural pressure and, as a consequence, the almost universal termination of criminal cases due to "reconciliation of the parties."

### Legislative ambiguity:

Analysis of case law regarding crimes against health demonstrates that for "infliction of minor harm to health," the investigator has the option to classify the act as either a misdemeanor or a felony. Out of 48 verdicts for causing bodily harm, 37% of the criminal cases were dropped to reconciliation of the parties, and in 25% of the cases, the person was released on probation. In 19% of the cases, the guilty parties received a prison sentence, and in 13% of the cases offenders were fined.

### Disproportionate sentencing:

Analysis of court decisions for crimes against life reveals risks of disproportionate sentencing. Out of 48 court decisions for crimes against sexual inviolability and sexual freedom, 49% of the criminal cases were terminated with reconciliation of the parties, and 35% of the offenders were deprived of their freedom. Among the analyzed cases were criminal cases related to crimes against the sexual inviolability of underage girls (14 years old), where law enforcement and the court classified the act as voluntary sexual intercourse. For crimes against family relations and children's interests (abduction for the purpose of marriage; violation of legislation on marriage age in religious ceremonies; coercion to enter into de facto marital relations; domestic violence) detention was applied in only 5% of cases. In the majority of cases, preventive measures such as travel restrictions (41%) or house arrest (13%) were chosen.

Data analysis reveals that the main type of punishment applied to those who are convicted for gender-based crimes and domestic violence, is imprisonment. However, out of 164 criminal cases analyzed, the court released 41 defendants (25%) under probationary supervision. Legal experts note that such use of the probation system

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violates principles of reasonableness and proportionality of punishment.

The justice process is largely unstandardized. In 2022, the department for generalizing judicial practice, analyzing judicial statistics and ensuring the work of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic compiled a generalization of judicial practice for 2017-2020 in

criminal cases related to crimes in the field of GBV, and the results of the study are still being considered by the judicial panel of the Supreme Court in criminal and misdemeanor cases. However, due to changes in legislation and the entry into force of new editions of the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes in 2021, the generalization has lost its relevance.

## **4** INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR REHABILITATION

In August 2019, a Government Resolution “On the Procedure for the Protection and Defense Against Domestic Violence” approved a Standard Program for Changing Violent Behavior for individuals who have committed domestic violence. The aim of the Program is to change the behavior of those who perpetrate domestic violence, from abusive and violent to respectful and safe; increasing the accountability of individuals who commit domestic violence for the consequences of their own behavior; and helping to prevent further instances of domestic violence.

Due to both objective factors (problems with recruiting participants for the “mandatory” corrective program) and subjective factors (pressure from patriarchal social norms), practitioners implementing the Program have started to “promote” it as a course to improve communication skills in family relationships or as a “partnership” program, thus forming “voluntary” groups. This substantially changes the goals of the Program. In interviews for this study Program facilitators explained such changes with statements such as “participants request to train their wives too,” “one needs to hear both sides,” and that “women often do not communicate.”

The functional tasks of the territorial structures of the Ministry of Labor, Social Welfare and Migration (MLSWM) do not include referring subjects to the Correctional Program, although MLSWM has been identified by the “Law on Prevention and Protection against Domestic

Violence” as the responsible government body for the implementation of the Correction Program.

Effective delivery of correctional programmes requires highly sensitive tools for assessing the nature of the violence and the risk of its recurrence. Risk assessment procedures and risk management strategies are considered part of comprehensive measures to prevent re-victimization and violence reduction programs. In Kyrgyzstan, the ODARA (The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment) tool has gained popularity as part of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung projects, allowing for the categorization of offenders who have committed violence against an intimate partner into low and high-risk categories. Dozens of training sessions have been conducted on the use of this tool among employees of law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and crisis centers. A pilot project has been operating for several years at the Oktyabrski District Department of Internal Affairs. However, practical application data of the tool is not available.

Various risk assessment tools of different types are used in international practice. For example, there is a group of danger assessment tools, to which ODARA belongs, and there is a group of lethality assessment tools. Developers of risk assessment tools emphasize the importance of such programs primarily for the immediate inclusion of victims/potential victims in the protection system.

## SECTION 3:

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, CIVIL SOCIETY AND DONOR COMMUNITY

### 1 Key recommendations for the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

*Regionally, the Kyrgyz Republic leads the way in strengthening legislation to better serve the needs of GBV victims and to improve GBV prevention. The current passage through parliament of a package of reforms to GBV legislation reflects political will for further improvements to the country's legislative framework. The following recommendations are relevant to the ongoing reform process, as well as wider improvements to regulation and infrastructure.*



#### LEGISLATION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The following amendments to the legislative framework will ensure effective prevention, protection, adjudication, and provisions of remedies, in accordance with international standards, and will address many of the gaps and barriers identified in this report.

- Eliminate the possibility of reconciliation of the parties for violations of marriage age laws or for committing "rape" or "sexual violence." Reconciliation should not be an option for offenses that involve serious harm and trauma.
- Establish a minimum age of sexual consent to protect minors from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Specifically exclude the possibility of probation for individuals convicted of serious gender-based crimes. This ensures that perpetrators face appropriate and proportional consequences for their actions.
- Grant victims the legislative right to submit a petition for deposition directly to the investigative judge in cases of gender-based crimes. This empowers victims and ensures their active participation in the legal process.
- Review and amend existing legal frameworks to explicitly address and regulate the isolation of perpetrators during the Protective Order period. Consider the establishment of penalties for non-compliance with the isolation requirements, ensuring accountability and reinforcing the effectiveness of the Protective Order.
- Support policy changes to improve accessibility and quality of Free Legal Aid for GBV survivors, including the development and adoption of standards for free legal aid provisions.

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## OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Standardize the regulatory definitions of policy actors involved in GBV prevention to create a more cohesive approach. Currently, regulatory acts define responsible providers differently, creating confusion in terms of coordination and interaction procedures.
- Identify one state body from the 17 actors currently authorized by law to prevent and protect against GBV to lead interdepartmental coordination, collaboration and information-sharing at the local level. This will contribute to a more efficient and organized response to GBV, reducing potential gaps and overlaps in service provision.
- Establish clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for interagency coordination and service delivery at all stages of the continuum of care. Ensure SOPs define the exact roles and responsibilities of each actor and include detailed flowcharts and algorithms for each type of GBV to address the diverse needs of GBV victims.
- Develop and implement standardized guidelines for handling judicial cases relating to GBV, incorporating best practices, human rights principles, and international standards. Recommend to the Supreme Court that these guidelines address the specific challenges and nuances of GBV cases to promote consistency and fairness in the justice process.
- Free Legal Aid Service to develop a tool for monitoring the quality of services delivered by legal aid providers based on the adopted free legal aid standards.

## DATA COLLECTION

- Integrate and automate information exchange systems among key justice-related entities, including the Automated Information Systems for the "Unified Register of Crimes and Misdemeanors," courts, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs database. This will address the current variation in departmental statistics.
- Initiate a comprehensive review of judicial procedures related to GBV cases, taking into account changes in legislation and the introduction of new editions of the Criminal and Criminal Proceedings Codes since 2021.

## VICTIM SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

- Work collaboratively with crisis centers, CSOs providing services for GBV survivors and relevant stakeholders to develop national minimum standards for protection of GBV survivors, which ensure victim support services adopt a victim-centered approach, including the principles of non-discrimination and do-no-harm, and accommodating the needs and experiences of different groups of survivors, including those with disabilities and children, across various service settings.
- Establish and implement local-level referral mechanisms to ensure efficient and timely referral of GBV survivors to relevant services.
- Establish feedback mechanisms to capture the perspectives of victims and use this information to continually improve the quality of GBV response services.
- Introduce GBV training modules to the FLAS online training portal.

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## RESOURCE AND FUNDING

- Increase funding to crisis centers, via State Social Procurement Orders, to ensure sustainability and comprehensive service provision.
- Increase transparency and accountability in the financing of GBV prevention and protection policies. Based on the obtained data, government agencies should optimize expenditure policies and enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation.
- Fund intensive supervision of persons under probation supervision.
- Ensure financial support, through diverse sources, for community level institutions such as LCPDVDs and non-governmental organizations. Lack of funding has been identified as a significant barrier to GBV prevention and response at the local level, and addressing this issue is vital for sustaining and enhancing the impactful work.

## TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Work with relevant training institutions to integrate newly-developed SOPs into the curriculum for professionals involved in GBV prevention and response.
- Provide specialized training and capacity-building programs for service providers to enhance their skills in documentation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Focus on addressing discriminatory cultural norms, promoting gender sensitivity, and emphasizing the importance of unbiased and victim-centered approaches.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Work with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and experts, to develop a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation framework for GBV prevention and protection activities. This will establish clear and measurable indicators that reflect the effectiveness of implemented measures, the quality of services, and the impact on survivors.
- Deploy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of legislative reforms and make necessary adjustments based on ongoing feedback and data analysis.
- Strengthen follow-up procedures to verify efficiency of referral mechanisms and to check services were provided and remained accessible for GBV survivors. Regular consultations with community representatives and service providers are strongly recommended to ensure that local-level referral mechanisms align with available services at the region/district level and meet the needs and expectations of affected populations.

## 2 Key recommendations for civil society organizations

*Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a key role in the fight against GBV. They are actively involved in awareness-raising, advocating for policy changes, mobilizing communities, providing support services for survivors, responding to crises, and contributing to monitoring and evaluation efforts - as direct service providers in partnership with the government. Their engagement is fundamental to comprehensively addressing the complex issue of GBV.*



### AWARENESS-RAISING

- Collaborate with national media platforms to launch educational campaigns that raise awareness about the root causes and consequences of GBV.

### ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE

- Advocate for comprehensive, evidence-based reform of GBV legislation, prioritizing policies that safeguard the rights of all GBV survivors, including confidentiality, legal protection, and access to comprehensive support services, in accordance with international standards.
- Advocate for policies that promote collaboration across various sectors - including health, education, justice, and social service - and incorporate anti-discrimination policies.
- Advocate for the introduction of performance indicators for government agencies and their employees in the field of protection from gender-based violence.
- Advocate for increased transparency and accountability in the financing of GBV policies and support research on government financing and the outcomes and effects of expenditure policies.
- Advocate for increased funding and support for local grassroots organizations and institutions, such as crisis centers and LCPPDVs.

### COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

- Encourage community leaders, influencers, and educators to participate in awareness-raising campaigns that challenge and change harmful cultural beliefs related to GBV.
- Strengthen organizational transparency of CSOs and accountability in project implementation.

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## SUPPORT SERVICES

- Provide support and capacity building to ensure organizations can adapt to evolving challenges and the changing needs of survivors with comprehensive, high-quality services.
- Implement ongoing, specialized training and mentorship programs to challenge and transform discriminatory cultural norms within service providers.
- Provide technical support to government agencies to enhance gender sensitivity of services provided to victims of gender-based violence.

## MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- Support media outlets to raise awareness about GBV, promote constructive public dialogue on harmful social norms, and disseminate information about available support services. GBV survivors currently rely on informal, ad-hoc channels such as word of mouth or social media
- Work collaboratively with the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic to embed GBV prevention initiatives within cultural and educational programs and events.

## CRISIS RESPONSE

- Document and evaluate the experience of temporary shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Document the experience of crisis centers and other NGOs in providing correctional programs.
- Leverage technology, including mobile applications and websites, to provide easily accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date information about available services.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for information and education activities on changing social norms.
- Develop indicators that go beyond "coverage" to measure a campaign's actual effectiveness in altering cultural attitudes and behaviors related to GBV.

### 3 Key recommendations for the donor community

*The development donor community plays a pivotal role in combating GBV by allocating financial resources across the continuum of care. Donor funds support capacity-building initiatives, enhance survivor services, and support data collection and research initiatives to facilitate deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding GBV. Donors prioritize youth engagement, recognizing the importance of involving the younger generation in efforts to combat GBV. They also allocate funds to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) efforts, enabling the assessment of the impact of interventions and promoting greater accountability. The positive impact of this support would be amplified by greater focus on comprehensive GBV programmes, rather than projects with a narrow scope. Programs that drive a more harmonized approach at all stages of the continuum of care, and that address wider issues such as education, harmful social norms and economic empowerment should be prioritized.*



#### CAPACITY BUILDING

- For policy stakeholders: promote better documentation practices, including the introduction of results analysis, impact assessments and publication of results into project and program cycles.
- For service providers: integrate trauma-informed practices into training modules for building skills to sensitively and effectively respond to the unique needs of survivors. Emphasize the importance of recognizing and addressing trauma in the provision of GBV response services. Prioritize survivor feedback and experiences as valuable insights for shaping effective response strategies. Deliver training programs that educate service providers on how to navigate and overcome sociocultural barriers and address harmful social norms.
- For authorities: prioritize the development and implementation of context-specific risk assessment methodologies within correctional programs to identify the level of risk posed to victims (including lethality), particularly related to the immediate inclusion of victims/potential victims into the protection system.

#### SURVIVOR SERVICES

- Transition from short-term project funding for crisis centers to medium-term development plans for both the services provided and the organizations themselves.



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- Create interactive communities of practitioners and other donor organizations for data exchange, information sharing on activities, discussions on methodological aspects of work, etc.
  - Provide assistance in critically assessing the needs

of communities and organizational capabilities of crisis centers and shelters in order to develop the typology of different shelters and strengthen their "integration" into local- and national-level activities.

## DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

- Prioritize the collection of reliable data and research to inform evidence-based policies and recommendations for enhancing the accessibility and quality of services for both victims and perpetrators of violence.
- Conduct targeted research to understand how socio-cultural norms among diverse service providers impact access to and quality of gender-based violence services, facilitating evidence-based policy making

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- Establish a cohesive framework involving key governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, and Ministry of Internal Affairs to address the institutional gap in challenging discriminatory social norms. This will streamline activities and move beyond campaign "coverage" indicators to sustained societal transformation.
- Collaborate with non-governmental organizations and international partners to ensure a unified approach to providing essential information and education activities on gender-based violence prevention among youth (15-24 year age group).

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Support CSO initiatives to develop organization-level monitoring and evaluation systems with technical assistance for institutional development based on professional needs assessments.
- Jointly document and evaluate the experience of temporary shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic, including public discussions of what was effective.
- Initiate systematic reporting by the donor community on the financial and technical assistance provided to support the state's policy on protection from gender-based violence.

The full and short versions of the report are available on PIL Research Company's website under the 'Projects' tab:



## FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Jigerduu Jarandar – Active Communities – project, financed by USAID and implemented by FHI 360 in 2019-2024, is supporting civil society and the Kyrgyz Government to provide women with better access to shelters, psychosocial support, legal protection, improve services for GBV survivors, strengthen violence prevention measures, and initiate social norm change through communication campaigns.

Since 2020, Active Communities has supported eleven Crisis Centers and CSOs across the Kyrgyz Republic to provide holistic services to survivors and engage with national law and policy reform processes. Under the project's Rapid Response Grant program (July 2020 – February 2021) and the GBV Survivor Pathways Initiative (launched in mid-2022), these organizations have provided shelter and legal or psychological assistance to nearly 7,000 GBV survivors. Starting from 2022, in partnership with USAID's Enterprise Competitiveness

Project, Active Communities has also supported nine Crisis Centers and CSOs to provide economic and employment opportunities to GBV survivors.

Active Communities contributed to the development of the present National Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2024) aimed at achieving Gender Equality by 2030. Additionally, Active Communities collaborates with policymakers and Members of Parliament to reform civil and criminal laws, enhancing protection against gender-based violence (GBV), and ensuring more equitable access to justice for GBV survivors

Active Communities works with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to enact policy changes and a stronger legislative framework for GBV prevention and response. The program also supports service providers across the continuum of care:

- **107** citizens with GBV/DV cases received support from lawyers at Active Communities partner organizations (including crisis center lawyers) – legal support related to such issues as divorce, property division, alimony, restraining order.
- Around **7,000** GBV/DV survivors received support from Crisis Centers supported by Active Communities (out of which 803 GBV survivors were supported with shelter)
- **247** LCPPDVs received or are currently receiving technical support from Active Communities.
- **124** prevented GBV/DV cases by LCPPDVs

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This research is conducted by the PIL Research Company in 2022, provides decision-makers, service providers, and civil society with a comprehensive analysis of the quality of preventive measures and services available for survivors of gender-based violence and the barriers they face in seeking justice and rehabilitation. The particular value of the research lies in its provision of an evidence based findings and recommendations to support intersectoral collaboration, targeted resource allocation, improvement of services, and addressing legislative gaps.





Approval for this study from the FHI 360 Office of International Research Ethics was granted on October 14, 2022. Approval for this study from the Institutional Review Board of the American University of Central Asia was granted on November 4, 2022.

**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this report is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the view of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government

