

**Help & Shelter/EU Promotion of Human Rights  
Project**

**Contract No. 2011/267-216**

**Interim Narrative Report**

**17 June 2011 – 30 June 2012**

## 1. Description

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- 1.1. Name of beneficiary of grant contract: Help & Shelter
- 1.2. Name and title of the contact person: Josephine Whitehead (Director/Secretary)
- 1.3. Name of partners in the Action: None
- 1.4. Title of the Action: Promotion of human rights of victims of domestic violence and sexual violence and child abuse
- 1.5. Contract number: Contract number: 2011/267-216
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the reporting period: July 2011 to June 2012
- 1.7. Target country(ies) or region(s): Guyana
- 1.8. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups<sup>1</sup> (if different) (including numbers of women and men):
- 1.9. Country(ies) in which the activities take place (if different from 1.7): N/A

## 2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

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### 2.1. Executive summary of the Action

During the first year of the project, Help & Shelter was able to meet or surpass almost all of the counselling targets, with 96% being the lowest target reached in our face-to-face and hotline counselling services.

Women made up the largest number of our clientele in all areas of counselling services, with 577 women and girls and 120 men and boys benefiting from face-to-face and hotline counselling services, the majority of them survivors of intimate partner domestic violence. Intra-family violence was also experienced by a smaller percentage of both female and male clients. Through face-to-face and hotline counselling services, clients were able to understand the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, develop necessary coping skills, self confidence and self esteem and access support services. Our client-centred approach resulting in 528 clients, 492 women and girls and 36 men returning for follow up face-to-face counselling sessions indicates a level of satisfaction with our services.

Additionally a total of 64 clients, 60 women and girls and 4 men and boys received court support services. The majority of adult clients accessing court support services were survivors of domestic violence who applied for Domestic Violence Act protection and occupation orders and/ or assault charges. Child maintenance orders were also pursued by 14% of clients. A few adult female survivors of rape and incest also benefited from court support services. Of the 44 court support cases being heard, outcomes were achieved in 63% of all adult cases. Most of the child clients accessing our court support services were survivors of rape, incest and indecent assault. Due to a number of challenges and deficiencies in the sexual offences legislation and

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<sup>1</sup> “Target groups” are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and “final beneficiaries” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

the justice delivery system, 64% of all child court support cases, many which started well over a year ago, are continuing.

Free advisory counselling and referrals services were given to a total of 150 clients: 137 women and girls and 13 men and boys. Legal aid was the most accessed service, followed by law enforcement (police) services. Other services accessed by clients included housing and shelter, child protection, probation and welfare, health, employment and court services. Additionally, a total of 27 female adults and 32 dependent children were referred from our crisis centre to our shelter for battered women.

While some moderate success has been made in advocacy for the advances in the implementation of the National Domestic Violence Policy the non-convening of the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee for 10 months, and when re-convened, the lack of ministry representation, has stymied progress.

## **2.2. Activities and results**

### **Activity 1**

#### **Provision of free face-to-face and hotline counselling to 2,175 victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse**

A total of 697 clients, 577 women and girls and 120 men and boys benefitted from face-to-face and hotline counselling during the first year of the project, with the majority of clients (664) being adults and 33 being children. These numbers reflect 32% of the overall three year project target of 2,175, which indicates, that we are well on track to meet target requirements, having achieved 96% of these activities in the first year.

#### **Results of Activity**

Most of the female (79%) and 20% of the male adult clients accessing face-to-face counselling services were survivors of intimate partner domestic violence, with 90% of all adult females and 88% of all adult male receiving counselling for domestic violence issues. Patterns of abuse differed between female and male clients, with intimate partner physical abuse experienced by more female clients (67%) than male clients (31%) and psychological and other forms of non-physical abuse experienced by more male clients (68%) than female clients (32%). Intra-family violence was also experienced by 10% of all female clients and 12% of male clients, with physical violence being the most prevalent. The largest number of both male and female clients seen were between 26 and 40 years old; followed by clients in 41 to 60 age group, then the 60+ and 19 to 25 age groups. The ethnicity of adult face-to-face clients reflected the diversity of the major race groups found in Guyana, with Guyanese of African heritage making up approximately 38% of clients and Guyanese of East Indian heritage comprising 31%. Clients of mixed heritage were the third largest group, making up approximately 29% of all adult face-to-face clients. Most clients accessing our face-to-face services were from the county of Demerara and of these the highest number came from Georgetown, the capital city and its environs, where our crisis centre and shelter for battered woman and their dependent children are located. Much smaller numbers of clients came from other areas, including Essequibo, Berbice, Linden and the hinterland regions.

#### **Assessment of Results**

Through face-to-face and hotline counselling clients were able to understand the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, develop necessary coping skills, self confidence and self esteem and were able to access support services directly or with the support of our counsellor/advocate. Specific examples of success include empowering clients to further their academic qualifications and in doing so to fulfill their dreams of pursuing careers, thereby opening the door to financial independence. Clients suffering from depression and anxiety were counselled to help them to develop necessary assertive skills so they were better able to stand up for their rights and negotiate issues with husbands and partners. Empowering clients to build self confidence and teaching stress management techniques helped clients to better cope with the

stress of living in or leaving abusive relationships. Many clients were also helped with getting protection and occupation orders and to access justice through interventions by counsellors with the Guyana Police Force and the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic. As a result, many clients expressed appreciation of the counselling and support they received from our counsellors, which allowed them to move on to living lives free from violence and the threat of violence.

During this year one of the most high profile cases involved the rape of a client by a senior police official. During the ordeal of the investigation and the perpetrator's successful attempt to have the case quashed by the Chief Justice, the client was able to access psychosocial support and counselling and continues to keep in touch with her counsellor. Her case is being appealed and the senior official has since retired from the police force. Alcohol abuse continues to be a leading contributor to numerous social ills in Guyanese society and contributes to the severity and escalation of many domestic violence incidents. As such, our success with a couple and their children who were referred to Al Anon is particularly heartening as the husband and father has since then not consumed alcohol. The wife keeps up with her counselling sessions and is working on developing coping skills and strategies to deal with other issues in her marriage. We have also been having some success in couple counselling, mostly at the request of clients themselves, and have seen progress made as couples are able to improve communication and discuss issues in a non-violent and non-threatening way.

Through hotline counselling quite a few clients who were having suicidal thoughts were helped and indicated that through the hotline service they were able to get guidance and knowledge when they felt hopeless and had no one to turn to for help. Another hotline client who was suicidal after recently suffering a stroke was able to find the courage to reach out and find someone to assist him around the house, resulting in an improved outlook and attitude to life.

Our counselling approach is client-centered and premised on the client being the primary decision-maker in determining the action social care plan and type and length of the counselling intervention. The large number of returning clients (528 clients, 492 women and girls and 36 men and boys, chose to return for follow up counselling sessions during the reporting period) points to satisfaction with our counselling services.

### **Challenges & Risks**

Our face-to-face and hotline counselling services have not be without their challenges. These include clients failing to keep counselling appointments and issues of the safety of counsellors and female clients when male perpetrators come to the crisis centre looking for their partners. At times, counsellors have experienced some difficulty with their case load on the occasions when only one counsellor is available to meet with clients. Another challenge is maintaining contact with clients as some find it difficult to call or maintain contact with their counsellors as they do not have access to cheaper land line telephone services and cell calls to us are sometimes too costly for them. Another major challenge for counsellors has been the effectiveness and service rendered by welfare departments of the disciplined services.

### **Activity 2**

#### **Delivery of free court support services (counselling, preparing client for court procedures, attending court sessions) to 150 survivors/victims of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse**

A total of 64 clients, 60 women and girls and 4 men and boys, received given free court support services during the first year of the project. Of these 44 were adults and 20 children. These numbers reflect approximately 42% of our overall 3 year target of 150 clients. As such we have surpassed our target requirements for the first year.

### **Results of Activity**

#### **Adult Clients**

The majority of adult clients (52%) accessing court support services were survivors of domestic

violence who applied for Domestic Violence Act protection and occupation orders and/or assault charges. Child maintenance orders were also pursued by 14% of clients, many concurrently with their applications for DVA orders or assault case charges. Court support services were also provided to three female survivors of rape and incest. Other legal options pursued by clients were division of property, divorce and threatening language. Some of the assault charges were of an extreme nature, including attempted murder and assault causing serious bodily harm. Husbands followed by male intimate partners were the chief perpetrators of offences against clients, making up 48% of all perpetrators. The other 52% included ex-husbands, ex male-partners, fiancés, in-laws and boyfriends. There was also one female intimate partner perpetrator.

Of the 44 court support cases being heard, outcomes were achieved in 63% of all cases, with 18% of final and 7% of interim Domestic Violence Act (DVA) protection orders and 13% of child support maintenance orders successfully granted. One case was also referred to the High Court for trial by jury. However, the difficulties and long delays in getting court cases completed continues to be one of the challenges of Help & Shelter's court support services, reflected in the continuation of 36% of all cases started during this project year. A few clients (4%) chose to voluntarily withdraw their cases and 11% of clients' cases were dismissed by magistrates mostly due to clients not showing up in court or reaching some form of accommodation with their offenders. Adults accessing our court support services were predominately female (98%) with the highest percentage in the 41 to 60 age group, followed by those in the 26 to 40 age group. A smaller but significant number of adult clients (18%) were between the ages of 19 and 25.

### **Child Clients**

Child clients accessing our court support services were also predominately female (85%) with the highest percentage in the 12 to 18 age group (45%), followed by those in the 6 to 8 age group (30%) and then those in the 9 to 11 age group (20%). Our youngest child client is 4 years old.

The majority of child clients accessing our court support services were survivors of rape (60%), incest (20%) and indecent assault (10%). Domestic Violence Act protection orders were also applied for and granted for 2 child clients. Fathers (25%) followed by step-fathers (15%), neighbours (15%), house visitors, villagers, a brother-in-law and an uncle were the perpetrators of offences against child clients. In two cases, child clients were gang raped by 2 or more males while in 2 other cases the perpetrators of child sexual offences were themselves children.

Due to a number of specific challenges and deficiencies in sexual offences legislation and in the justice delivery system including long delays in completion of court cases; 64% of all child court support cases are continuing many which started well over a year ago. Unlike adult court support cases, the great majority of child court support cases as outlined above are sexual offence cases which require more lengthy criminal prosecution. As such just 3 or 15% of all cases were referred to a higher court for trial by jury and 4 or 20% were dismissed.

### **Assessment of Results**

As a result of court support counselling clients reported a reduction in psychological trauma associated with domestic and sexual violence and child abuse before during and after the judicial process as a result of counselling. Some specific examples of this included improved parent child relationships as well as improved behavioural patterns. One client indicated that she is seeing efforts being made by her partner to foster positive changes in regards to his relationship with their children. One client reported that more quality time is now being spent with the children. This she feels is as a result of the ongoing counselling process. Another client's mother reported a cessation of conflict between herself and relatives as a result of counselling sessions with the relatives. The conflict had arisen due to the sexual abuse of client.

Quite a few clients who were suicidal or having suicidal thoughts were helped to recognize and manage the stress and depression they were experiencing. One client called to express her thanks to her counsellor as she was able to understand how important it is to be alive and well for herself and her son's sake. Counselling and discussions on health and taking care of self helped clients to improve their eating habits instead of allowing the stress of the court case to consume them. Clients also said they were satisfied with the in-court support and information provided by court support counsellors, including information about relevant legislation and services available for prevention of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse. Some specific examples of this service included providing relevant information to the police about a perpetrator who had been successfully evading arrest, which should lead to his arrest and detention. Clients were also assisted in finding out the current status of their sexual offences cases, the provisions of the DVA and the application process for protection orders. Through counselling, a client who had for years suffered abuse at the hands of her brother came to the realization that her brother had a history of mental illness and as a result will be making a court application for psychiatric treatment for her brother.

### **Challenges & Risks**

One of the challenges affecting court support counsellors is court attendance conflicts, where client cases may be fixed for similar times and days in different courts. One strategy being pursued to address this is liaising with police prosecutor and court officers to have cases called as early as possible. Another major challenge is the need for amendment to the Sexual Offences Act 2010 so that sexual offence cases can proceed and be heard in a timely manner. At present few cases are getting through the court system, reinforcing the adage that justice delayed is justice denied. This situation is particularly worrying for child victims of sexual offences.

### **Activity 3**

#### **Provision of free advocacy and advisory counselling and referral services to 450 victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse**

Free advisory counselling and referral services were provided to a total of 150 clients, 137 women and girls and 13 men and boys. Of these, 96% were adults and 4% children. These numbers reflect approximately 33% of our overall 3 year target of 450 clients. As such we have achieved 100% of our target requirement for the first year.

### **Results of Activity**

A breakdown of client referral services showed that legal aid was the most accessed service, with 50% of clients choosing to pursue this option. The second most accessed referral service was law enforcement (police) services, with 16% of all clients pursuing this option. Other services were accessed by clients included housing or shelter services. A total of 27 female adults and 32 dependent children were referred to Help & Shelter's home for battered women, child protection services (6%), probation and welfare services (4%), health services (3%), employment services (3%) and court services 2%. Altogether clients accessed some 217 advisory counselling and referral services during this first project year.

A demographic breakdown of clients accessing advisory counselling and referral services shows that 46% of clients were legally married, 28% were in common law intimate partner relationships and 10% were separated. The other 16% were single, widowed or students. Most clients, 87% had children and were in the 26-40 age group followed by those in the 41-60 age group.

### **Assessment of Results**

Clients who were survivors of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse were informed of the legal, health, educational, housing, employment, financial and other services available to them, and supported in making informed choices through accessing a multi-agency network of services. Many female clients who had experienced abuse at the hands of intimate partners were advised by the counsellor advocate on the process applying for Domestic Violence Act (DVA)

protection orders, had appointments made for them and were accompanied to the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic (GLAC) for free legal representation.

Clients indicated their appreciation of this service since they now know when to take time off of from their daily lives to see a legal aid lawyer, instead of showing up at legal aid and not necessarily being able to see to a lawyer on the same day. In a number of cases clients were granted protection and occupation orders against their husbands or partners and also obtained weekly child maintenance orders. In one case the counsellor advocate was able to assist a client who is legally blind to apply for a protection order. The client indicated that she had wanted to apply for a protection order in the past, but that her disability had hindered her. Another client, who was HIV positive and had not been adhering to her treatment plan for tuberculosis, was assisted in obtaining the necessary medical help, and through networking with other agencies was able to access additional specialized services. Clients who were at immediate and serious risk from their domestic violence perpetrators were also referred to our shelter for battered women and their dependent children while legal and other forms of assistance were being pursued by the counsellor advocate on their behalf. A case in point was a client whose partner has threatened to kill her and her daughter. Her partner had been arrested but had escaped custody. In another case a client, who was a survivor of domestic violence, was on the verge of being homeless and was not able to find adequate or affordable housing for herself and her children.

A range of other services were also pursued for clients, including sourcing legal assistance for one client so that she could continue to farm on land as stipulated in her DVA protection order, even though her husband had attempted to stop her and children from entering the farmland. Clients were also assisted in getting legal advice and representation for their divorce and custody matters. One client said that her child's father would not take care of their four month old baby boy and would tell people that the baby was not his. An intervention was done and the client obtained necessary legal advice. Another client who had experienced domestic abuse for fourteen years and who despite making reports to the police had never managed to get her husband charged, decided that she had had enough of living in this state and wanted a divorce. She was assisted in getting legal advice on petitioning for a divorce.

Most of the clients accessing our advisory counselling and referral services are adult females but the services were also provided to some children. In one case a 17 year old girl, who at 14 had been placed at the home of a family friend by her mother, subjected to repeated psychological abuse, made to work in the family business and prevented from attending school, was assisted in leaving her situation of bondage and going to live with her grandmother. Previous to this, the client had made several attempts to leave the home but had been brought back to the abusive environment by police acting on behalf of the family. Two male clients with assistance from our counsellor advocate are pursuing custody of their children and access to the family home

### **Challenges & Risks**

Challenges during the first year are somewhat similar to some of those identified for face-to-face and court support counselling services, namely the delays in getting applications for final and interim Domestic Violence Act protection orders completed and clients not keeping their appointments with the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic. The unprofessional behaviour and attitude of some members of the police force has also been a challenge and has resulted in Help & Shelter having to make formal complaints about some matters to those in authority. Another challenge and risk for clients is reconciliation with their abusive partners and husbands, as in many cases the abusive behaviour re-occurs. We however understand the change process that survivors of domestic violence go through and are always there to give support and assistance when needed.

### **Activity 4**

#### **Advocacy for advances in the implementation of the national domestic violence policy**

### **Activities**

A one day Domestic Violence Training Workshop for 24 health care workers from six Regions facilitated by the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee (NDVOC) representative from Help & Shelter and another NGO was held in July 2011 as part of a 3 day Ministry of Health capacity building workshop. The objectives of the workshop were to increase awareness of domestic violence; recognize signs and symptoms of domestic violence in patients/clients; inform on steps to take to help survivors including appropriate referrals and roles and responsibilities of health workers to domestic violence treatment and prevention.

### **Results**

But apart from this activity, no meetings of the NDVOC were convened by the Ministry of Labour Human Service and Social Security between July 2011 and April 2012. In May 2012 meetings of the DVOC were reconvened. At the first meeting the Minister of Human Services agreed to circulate draft amendments to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Acts to members. The Director of Public Prosecutions reported that she had also drafted amendments to the Sexual Offences Act, particularly to address the constitutional challenge to paper committals in rape cases as she hopes this will accelerate the legal process, and made a forceful address to the meeting on the lack of ministerial or senior level representation at the meeting, inadequate investigation on the part of police, need for specialized units/centres for sexual assault cases and the need for training for the judiciary. A statutory date for future meetings of the NDVOC was agreed on and the need for gazetting of social workers/counsellors for the filing of DVA applications was raised again. Some progress has been made towards the development of a standard curriculum on domestic violence intervention and training for health workers but this was an initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with a USA university.

### **Challenges**

The main challenge has been the non-convening of the NDVOC by the designated officials of the Ministry of Human Services. This has been responsible for the lack of progress made in collaboration with key decision makers in building the capacity of rural and hinterland communities to respond to domestic violence and the encouragement and monitoring of a public awareness campaign targeting students and other members of the public on domestic violence prevention and gender discrimination. Help & Shelter has made a number of appeals and enquiries to the minister about the implementation of the National Domestic Violence Policy through the NDVOC and hopes that the necessary political will to achieve this will now be demonstrated.

#### **2.3. Planned activities that we were not able to implement – None**

#### **2.4. Assessment of the results of the Action so far**

The results so far indicate that the project has reached the number of beneficiaries anticipated and that the beneficiaries have received quality and effective services. As a result of the project, the human rights of beneficiaries have been promoted. The only negative result has been the non-convening of the NDVOC meetings by the Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security. After a number of representations made to the minister, meetings were recently reconvened and it is hoped that they will now continue without further interruption.

## 2.5. Updated action plan <sup>2</sup>

Year 2													
Activity	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
Execution 1. Free face-to-face & hotline counselling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Local partner
Execution 2. Free court support services	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Local partner
Execution 3. Free advocacy and advisory counselling and referral services	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Local partner
Execution 4. Advocacy for advances in the implementation of the National Domestic Violence Policy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Local partner

### 3. Partners and other Co-operation

#### 3.1. Assessment of the relationship between the formal partners of this Action - N/A

#### 3.2. Assessment of the relationship between Help & Shelter and State authorities in the Action country and how this relationship has affected the Action

Help & Shelter enjoys good and responsive relationships with the state authorities across several ministries and agencies. Support and collaboration on other projects has helped to foster working relationships that benefit the state's mandated responsibility and the services we provide.

The relationship between the state and Help & Shelter has benefited the Action and reflects a continuance of collaboration on addressing domestic and sexual violence and child abuse and promoting the human rights of victims/survivors.

As part of the established principles of collaboration between Help & Shelter and the state, a significant number of referrals are made by Help & Shelter to various state agencies including the Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security's Difficult Circumstances department; the Women of Worth program; the old age pensions department; the Women's Affairs Bureau and the Men's Affairs Bureau, and in turn these agencies make referrals to Help & Shelter for counselling, court support and shelter services.

<sup>2</sup> This plan will cover the financial period between the interim report and the next report.

The long hiatus in meetings of the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee has had a negative impact on the Action as our advocacy for advances in implementation of the national Domestic Violence Policy have necessarily been curtailed as a result.

### **3.3. Relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action**

#### Concerned Citizens Against Domestic Abuse

This Atlanta-based non-profit organisation has provided co-funding for the Action. CCADA was formed in August 2010 after a meeting in Guyana between founder Carol Fraser and a team of Help & Shelter members.

#### The Government & People of Canada through the Canada Fund

The Canada Funds also has also provided co-funding for the Action. Due to the vital nature of the work it does and its reputation for transparency and accountability, Help & Shelter has on several occasions been invited to submit proposals for Canada Fund support.

#### The final beneficiaries and target groups

The high level of returning clients is an indication of their satisfactions with the services provided to them under the project.

#### Other third parties

The NGO Red Thread is also represented on the NDVOC and there is frequent collaboration between the Help & Shelter and Red Thread representatives in their advocacy for improved implementation of the National Domestic Violence Policy.

The Guyana Legal Aid Clinic provides free legal advice and representation to clients referred to it by Help & Shelter (and who qualify for legal aid) in relation to Domestic Violence Act applications, divorce, custody, maintenance and other matters. In turn, GLAC refers clients in need of counselling and court support services to Help & Shelter.

### **3.4. Links and synergies developed with other actions**

The Action is linked to the other services provided by Help & Shelter, namely public education about the issues of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse through awareness sessions, training, the production and distribution of public education materials (leaflets, posters, PSAs) etc., the provision of shelter services to abused and trafficked women and their children; advocacy for improvements in and effective implementation of relevant legislation, and networking with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

### **3.5. Building upon/complementing previous EU grant**

Help & Shelter has received a previous EU grant - Promoting the rights of the child through education and the provision of services; contract number 2010/251-711; 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 – and this Action has been able to complement that project's action by providing counselling and court support services to children who have been subjected to abuse.

## **4. Visibility**

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EU's contribution to the Action has been recognised in all reports and in all other appropriate documentation. We have no objection to this report being published on EuropeAid Co-operation Office website.

Name of the contact person for the Action: Josephine Whitehead

Signature: J. Whitehead

Location: Georgetown, Guyana

Date report due: 16 September 2012

Date report sent: 30 July 2012