

# National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2010-2014

## Final Review and Proposals for New Strategy

### Introduction

- ✓ Please complete the questions below which relate to your area of work or experience.
- ✓ Be specific in your answers referring to particular actions under the National Strategy and to data, evaluations and reviews where possible.
- ✓ A key section of the questionnaire asks you to say what you can do under the next strategy. Actions need to be feasible, do-able and ambitious. Any wish lists under this heading should be labelled as such.
- ✓ The questions are purposefully open-ended. Please be as specific and as comprehensive as possible in your answers.
- ✓ Please remember specific developments or actions in relation to vulnerable or high risk groups, including Travellers, people with a disability, older people, migrants, young people, pregnant women and those involved with substance abuse.
- ✓ Do not expect to fill in each and every subheading; the subheadings are meant to prompt your memory.
- ✓ It is better to spend time developing the comment than agonising over which subheading it should go under.
- ✓ Do not get lost with all the subheadings; there are basically five questions:
  - 1. What was good about the strategy?**
  - 2. What was not good?**
  - 3. Have you any evidence either way?**
  - 4. What do you want to do in the next strategy?**
  - 5. What should others do?**
- ✓ Your submission will be published on the Cosc website with the final review.

**Name of your organisation:  
Mná Feasa Women's Domestic Violence Project, Cork.**

**And finally ....**

8. Please make additional comments, if any, here.

Mná Feasa has not noticed any specific changes under the strategy but we would like to provide you with some feedback for your research.

The Mná Feasa project was established in 1991 and issues we have noticed are:

1. Domestic Violence has changed over the last 20 years from a situation where it usually involved alcohol charged issues between a husband and wife to a situation today where we work with women in many different relationships, alcohol plays a lesser part and both parties take legal actions against each other. Mental and verbal abuse is the most common situations we deal with.
2. It is still almost impossible for a woman who owns/has a mortgaged home to leave and obtain alternative accommodation for herself and (if relevant) her children without sufficient financial reserves.
3. Our project still finds it difficult to achieve a good working relationship with the Garda Authorities.
4. Inconsistency within the Gardaí – e.g. a woman being told nothing can be done because her brother is her abuser (both living in the family home) and she is not financially dependent on him.
5. Demand for statistical information is not always possible e.g. funders want to know how many new women we have in our project – when is a new woman new? Is it only the first time she contacts us or if there is a gap of 12, 60 or 120 months?? Is she new if she comes with a new relationship / issue?
6. Support from Court services for our work is crucial and still in its infancy even after 23 years.
7. Physical abuse is the abuse we see least of but it is extremely difficult to prove verbal, financial and mental abuse to obtain a court order.
8. Recently in Cork City no judge was available to hear a case for an order on a Tuesday.

9. Women in rural areas still have to “follow the Court” perhaps from Skibbereen to Clonakilty – with no transport or childcare? How can this strategy help that woman?
10. A person can be barred from their home and yet still have clear Garda vetting as long as the order is not broken; how can that be right for certain occupations?
11. If a woman is granted an order it is then sent via ordinary post to her home for the perpetrator to receive the next morning. How safe is that?
12. Both parties should appear in court 8 days later – currently this can take as long as 12 weeks.
13. Women regularly attend court without a solicitor because legal aid will not represent them without receiving payment for their services up front. That payment has increased considerably in recent times and women quite literally have no money to pay for necessities not to mind legal aid so they go it alone.
14. Since 2002 we have provided a schools programme educating students, 3<sup>rd</sup> level, any other group interested in hearing about healthy and unhealthy relationships and domestic violence but still cannot access some schools.
15. It would be nice if someone from COSC or Justice would call to our project now and again – you would get great feedback through a round table discussion in a face to face situation and it would be nice to meet the people behind the names on the computers.