

*Moldova: Improving Access to Justice for the Vulnerable, with a focus on families affected by domestic violence and gender-based violence*

**JSDF <sup>1</sup>/GPSA: Joint Call for Proposals – Selection of Implementing Agency (NGO)**

In recent years, Moldova has made legal advancements with regards to gender equality and progress was made in addressing the protection of victims of domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV). However, Moldova continues to be one of the highest-ranking countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) for prevalence of physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner, and current infrastructure and support services to survivors of violence and their families are in precarious conditions financially and face obstacles in terms of their sustainability.

In this context, the World Bank is looking for a non-governmental organization to assist the World Bank in Moldova in broadening access to justice for families affected by DV & GBV through raising awareness among the most vulnerable on the services available, protection measures and delivering effective services. Increased awareness, in combination with innovative solutions to bring justice services closer to survivors of DV & GBV to strengthen the current system of on-the-ground-support through immediate and multi-disciplinary responses and tackling current levels of acceptability of violence against women and their children, are key pillars.

***Overall Objective:***

The overall objective of the engagement is to increase (a) participation in DV & GBV prevention programming through targeted livelihood interventions for families affected by DV & GBV as well as for those at risk, and (b) development and utilization of innovative multi-sectoral response services for survivors of DV & GBV and those at risk in select rural and urban communities in the North, South and Central of Moldova. This will be achieved through:

- (a) Development and testing of pilot interventions, including strengthening of public sector-civil society collaboration, to strengthen engagement with marginalized groups, in particular families affected by DV & GBV and those at risk. The pilot interventions aim to address factors of vulnerability of affected families and those at risk in select rural and urban communities across Moldova through a combination of activities addressing violence prevention, social norms and pursuing change in acceptance of DV & GBV as well as developing and testing new ways for survivors to exit economic empowerment.
- (b) Mitigation of negative consequences of DV & GBV by providing holistic response services for survivors of DV & GBV and their families as well as including the uptake in such services. The pilot interventions aim to address key gaps in local-level service provisions through raising awareness among local-level and front-line service providers for the impact and consequences of DV & GBV for families as well as communities and capacity building activities to increase institutional responsiveness.

To measure the outputs and eventually outcomes of the envisioned pilot interventions, the World Bank envisions the following indicators (non-concluding, to be finalized during project preparation):

- Increase in share of survivors and those at risk of DV & GBV and their families who report to be informed about their rights and services available (increase in percentage compared to baseline);
- Increase in share of survivors who report improved access to financial and welfare resources after participating in livelihood activities (increase in percentage compared to baseline);
- Increase in share of survivors of DV & GBV and their families who receive at least two multi-disciplinary services (e.g. psychosocial, legal, economic);
- Number of families participating in DV & GBV prevention activities (total number);

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<sup>1</sup> Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF): The Government of Japan and the World Bank established JSDF in June 2000, with the goal of providing grants to support community-driven development and poverty reduction projects that empower and directly improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable groups not reached by other programs. A unique and valued feature of the JSDF program is that it provides a platform for cooperation with non-governmental agencies and other local stakeholders in the development process.

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- Decrease in share of those accepting DV & GBV in targeted rural/urban communities (decrease in percentage compared to baseline);
- Half or more of the pilot services provided are considered of good quality or better by recipients (survivors of DV & GBV and their families as well as those at risk) (total number).

***Project Beneficiaries:***

Intended project beneficiaries are survivors and DV & GBV and their families as well as those at risk as Moldova continues to be one of the highest-ranking countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) for prevalence of physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner. Also, Moldova is a small economically-challenged country with a governance deficit; persisting gender discrepancies put further stress on existing economic and governance challenges.

Around 1,000 families are expected to be targeted (see above) in select rural and urban communities in a minimum of 6 rayons across Moldova, i.e. a minimum of two per Moldova's development regions (North, Center, South). In addition, one district in Chisinau and one satellite municipal community of Chisinau will be targeted. Preference will be given to those proposals that also consider pilot interventions including the eastern rayons from the left bank of the Nistru River. Moldova's three development regions face different economic and governance struggles; rural and urban communities face different challenges in terms of access to information, resources and services. Tailoring pilots to varying circumstances across Moldova will be essential for testing and determining successful interventions to address DV & GBV issues and will build into the project's exist strategy.

***Innovation:***

Innovation is at the core of any activities supported by JSDF and pioneering of new approaches is a fundamental characteristic of JSDF and will hence be a critical selection element. The envisioned innovative element inherent to this project will be about new ways of delivering services to survivors of DV & GBV as well as those at risk, i.e. through a holistic approach to service provisions. The Government of Moldova has made progress in addressing the protection of survivors. However, current infrastructure and support services to survivors are in precarious condition financially and face obstacles in terms of their sustainability. For example, under the country's decentralization reforms, support centers for women are in a precarious financial situation; and while in principle they are supposed to be supported by local governments they rely in practice on donor or NGO grants. Services addressing perpetrators are rarely found.

Further, and in addition to survivors of DV & GBV and those at risk, this project will also look at families affected by DV & GBV and develop/test measures to address impact and consequences as well as target those at risk via preventive interventions.

***Participatory M&E:***

In a first stage of preparation, a Seed Fund from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) facilitated focus group discussions (FDG) in select urban and rural communities across Moldova, stakeholder consultations and collection of baseline data. Outputs have helped to further define the target groups as well their specific needs, ideas and priorities and showed how current services respond (or not) to these. Further, consultations included a review of possible implementation arrangements, including a readiness assessment of existing capacities and systems.

***Sustainability:***

Current support services and institutional capacity to assist survivors of DV & GBV and their families are in precarious condition and face obstacles in terms of sustainability. In principle such socially relevant activities are supposed to be supported by local governments according to the law but in practice this does not happen. This project envisions to address factors of vulnerability of survivors of DV & GBV and their families as well as those at risk, including their access to financial and welfare resources, which will be

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paired with a currently not existing holistic response service on the ground, hence moving away from the current approach where interventions regularly depend on donor support and funding.

Further, the World Bank's Gender Action Plan for Moldova ensures that gender analysis and monitoring are consistently incorporated in existing and upcoming project and that progress is systematically recorded. The project outputs will feed into this, for example, one of the Gender Action Plan's indicators is on lowering rates of DV & GBV, hence influence the World Bank's engagement in Moldova. The envisioned activities will also feed into the implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence under Moldova's Gender Equality Coordination Council, hence making sure that pilot findings are reflected also at the national level.

***Project Concept***

Moldova's population suffers from limited access to, inefficiency and poor quality of services, especially in rural and remote areas which contributes to social exclusion. Access is a particular concern for women. According to Moldova's constitution, all citizens are "equal before the law and the public authorities", a *Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Men and Women* was enacted in 2006, its implementation, however, still presents obstacles for women in various aspects of social and economic life. About two third of Moldovan women have experiences psychological, sexual or physical violence from their husband or partner and at least one in ten has experienced economic violence. The economic situation and DV are also identified as key reasons for the persistent trafficking of women.

Despite progress in prevention and protection of survivors, Moldova's current infrastructure and support services are in precarious financial condition and face obstacles in terms of their sustainability. Services for perpetrators, children and families are rarely in place.

To address the issue and its consequences, the project will focus on two areas: first, prevention of DV & GBV through targeted livelihood interventions for families affected by DV & GBV as well as those at risk; and second, development and utilization of innovative multi-sectoral response services for survivors of DV & GBV and those at risk in select rural and urban communities in the North, South and Central of Moldova. To do so, the following components are envisioned:

- (1) **Component 1 (JSDF): To strengthen engagement with marginalized groups, in particular families affected by DV & GBV and those at risk**, this component will focus on designing and testing pilot interventions that will address factors of vulnerability in select rural and urban communities across Moldova through a combination of activities addressing violence prevention, social norms and testing new ways to improve the livelihood of survivors. Sub-components may include, but not necessarily be limited to: (a) community-based awareness and outreach campaigns, including positive role-modeling and story-telling in schools and education centers; (b) nation-wide awareness and outreach campaigns via TV trailers and telenovelas; (c) information material developed and distributed, to address violence prevention and existing social norms; and (d) testing new ways of livelihood improvements to address social and economic issues faced by survivors of DV & GBV.
- (2) **Component 2 (JSDF): To mitigate the negative consequences of DV & GBV as experienced by families affected by DV & GBV**, this component will focus on providing a holistic response service and encouraging an uptake in such services as key gaps in local-level service provisions are addressed and long-term, sustainable solutions are introduced through a combination of activities addressing reoccurrence of violence, social norms and pursuing change in acceptance of DV & GBV. Sub-components may include, but not necessarily be limited to: (a) mobile consultations in settlements with limited legal assistance services; (b) development of social media tools as point of first contact; (c) expanding services for aggressors in the Southern region of Moldova; (d) sensitization of judges and prosecutors towards the (long-term) impact of violence in families and avoidance of re-victimization;

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(e) development of a guide for victims of violence to maneuver the institutional procedures; (f) training of lawyers offering state-guaranteed legal aid; (g) statistical and reporting support under the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; and (h) conducting a series of policy roundtables involving high-level policy makers to encourage change.

- (3) **Component 3 (GPSA): To strengthen public sector-civil society collaborative engagement for reducing DV & GBV**, this component will focus on designing and implementing collaborative social accountability processes that bring together state and non-state actors to address DV & GBV specific challenges. Sub-components may include, but not necessarily be limited to: (a) assessing through participatory monitoring gaps in actions and services provided by local public authorities and other public sector stakeholders at the local level, and addressing these to improve coordination, collaboration and sustainability across efforts; (b) raising awareness among local authorities for the scope and impact of DV & GBV and partner with them to strengthen service delivery, for example by developing toolkits for survivors of DV & GBV (e.g. economic empowerment) or preventive educational activities in collaboration with local schools; and (c) establishing participatory feedback mechanisms to effectively monitor the implementation and success of activities by local authorities and other public sector stakeholders. This component will also aim to generate learning about the use of collaborative social accountability to improve DV & GBV service delivery in Moldova. The approaches developed and implemented during the project should be replicable by other government entities and have the potential to be transferable to other comparable project situations.

**Overall Grant Amount:** JSDF – USD 2.7 million; GPSA – USD 0.5 million