# FRONTLINE RESPONSE TO HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN FRANCE

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Abstract Since the 2000s, several laws have been enacted by the French parliament to make domestic violence a crime taken more seriously. Among the most important developments, a 2010 bill introduced the protection order in French law; the inter-ministerial mission for the protection of women against violence and the fight against human trafficking (MIPROF) was created in 2013, and a set of conferences between public stakeholders and NGOs took place in 2019 (the "Grenelle des violences conjugales"). In France, policies to combat domestic violence at the local level essentially rely on the setting and diffusion of two types of organisational arrangements. The first type of arrangement is a specialised domestic violence unit that is set up within a larger organisation with a more general mission, such as law enforcement agencies, hospitals, or social services. The second type of arrangement is an inter-organisational structure intended to provide a framework for partnership cooperation against domestic violence, such as social workers embedded in police stations to provide expert assistance to victims when they report domestic violence.

#### Keywords:

domestic violence, France, interagency cooperation, victims, police, NGO



DOI https://doi.org/10.18690/978-961-286-543-6.10 ISBN 978-961-286-543-6

## National framework of public policies to combat domestic violence

In France, as in many other Western countries, domestic violence has been denounced since the 1970s by feminist movements who identify the central role it plays in the reproduction of patriarchal oppression. The response to violence, as elsewhere, involves the creation of shelters for victims, the development of legislation making such violence illegitimate and the punishment of those who transgress this new legal framework. France stands out as a country where shelters are developing as part of the social work field, in contrast to the United States, where shelters are part of the mental health sector. There, the institutionalisation of the fight against domestic violence has been more rapid than in France, as a result of an early criminalisation and prosecution.

In France indeed, although violence committed within the couple was included in the Penal Code in 1994 (art. 222-13-6) as a specific offence and an aggravating circumstance, it was not until the mid-2000s that a genuine legislation began to emerge. Thus, the 2004 divorce reform included a clause on the eviction of violent spouses (art. 220-1 of the Civil Code) allowing the Judge for Family Affairs (JAF) to impose separation of residence and to attribute the exclusive enjoyment of housing to the victim of violence. Then the law of April 4, 2006 introduced the notion of 'respect' in marriage vows (which makes it possible to obtain a divorce for just fault in the event of violence), recognised theft and rape between spouses, expanded the notion of aggravating circumstances to *de facto* partners, those in civil unions and expartners (not just currently married people), and facilitated the eviction of the violent spouse from the home.

The law of 9 July 2010 is important because it provides the justice system with a new tool to respond to domestic violence: the protection order (art 515-9 and following of the Civil Code / law reinforced by the one of 4 August 2014). This can be issued by the family affairs judge in an urgent hearing when violence occurs within the relationship. It allows emergency measures - even if a complaint has not been filed - such as: eviction of the violent spouse, prohibiting him or her from coming into contact with the victim or their children, prohibiting the possession of a weapon, and non-disclosure of the victim's domicile or place of residence. On the financial level, the Judge of Family Affairs (JAF) can pronounce measures such as attribution of use of the shared home or temporary access to legal aid for the victim and can set

the degree of the violent spouse's contribution to the family's costs. The threat that the violent spouse poses to the children is also taken into account, with the possibility for the JAF to reduce his or her exercise of parental authority, to decide on visitation and accommodation rights and to set up measures for a protected visitation i.e. in the presence of a third person - who comes to pick up the child from the victim spouse's home, preventing the latter from being exposed to his or her aggressor. The protection order is pronounced for a period of 6 months, renewable under conditions.

Another central tool for responding to domestic violence and protecting victims from the risk of spousal homicide is the Serious Danger Telephone (TGD) generalised by the law of 4 August 2014 'for real equality between women and men'. The TGD is allocated by the Public Prosecutor's Office to victims of violence who are no longer living with their attacker - who have been notified of a judicial ban on contact with the victim. If the victim identifies that her attacker is nearby, all she has to do is press a button on the TGD to be put in touch with a tele-assistance service which assesses the danger and the victim's location. If necessary, the tele-assistant alerts the police on a dedicated channel so that a patrol can be sent to the victim without delay and, if necessary, the attacker can be arrested. To prevent repeat offending, the law of 4 August 2014 also included awareness-raising courses for authors of domestic violence that can be ordered by the court as additional or alternative sentences. And it introduced an obligation for initial and ongoing training for all professionals concerned; training then became one of the priorities of national public action.

In France, the official body responsible for coordinating the fight against domestic violence is the general directorate of social cohesion (DGCS) which reports to the solidarities and health ministry as well as to the secretary of state for equality between the sexes. The DGCS comprises of three departments, including a women's rights department (SDFE). This department pilots and coordinates policies against violence against women and runs a devolved network on women's rights, which includes a representative in each of France's regions and counties. the interministerial Mission for the protection of women against violence and the fight against human trafficking (MIPROF), created in 2013, has the threefold mission of developing training programmes for professionals who take charge of women who are victims of violence, ensuring the collection and analysis of data relating to such

violence, and coordinating the actions against trafficking in human beings at a national level. Finally, the Higher Council on Equal opportunities (HCE) is responsible for the assessment of the policy against domestic violence since its creation, also in 2013.

The report published on 9 October 2020 by the HCE points out the limits of French policy in the fight against domestic violence. In particular, it denounces the lack of a real inter-ministerial approach and calls for the rapid development of a framework for a large-scale public policy, namely a global action plan identifying the major challenges in this area, based on training, associated indicators, identified and earmarked funding and, finally, an annual evaluation by an independent body. The "Grenelle against domestic violence" could have given the necessary impetus to this large-scale public policy, but a year later, the HCE and the associations supporting victims of domestic violence regret that only the legislative measures - i.e. the least costly - have been implemented: the lifting of medical confidentiality to allow the reporting of domestic violence (which is highly controversial) and the deployment of the electronic tracking bracelets for the perpetrators. The most costly measures such as social support for victims and emergency accommodation are still awaited.

The specific measures taken during the covid-19 crisis in response to the very rapid rise in domestic violence caused by lockdown follow the same logic. They mainly consisted of the multiplication of measures enabling women victims to report the violence that had been done to them, for example by making it possible to pharmacists, or by organising, with voluntary associations, counselling areas

in shopping centres. However, following the report, there was a lack of solutions proposed: what happens after the women talked? Where is she supposed to go? A certain number of hotel nights, either for victims or for the perpetrator, have been financed. But by redeploying existing funding, and, which is even more problematic, funding dedicated to domestic violence. These are those of programme 137 for "Equality between women and men", which is used to finance associations providing assistance to victims, on the front line in the fight against domestic violence. It would have been logical, as suggested by the members of the senatorial delegation in charge of the assessment of the period, that the financing of hotel nights for the purpose of assigning aggressors to house arrest should have been covered by the justice budget.

In 2018, the resources mobilised to combat violence against women, whether public or private, were estimated at 79 million euros (HCE, 2018). As the report of the Senate's financial commission (2020) points out, the new credits announced following the Grenelle (the "Catherine" fund against feminicides) or lockdown were only internal redeployments. There is therefore a serious lack of funds to meet the needs, estimated between 506 million and 1.1 billion euros by the HCE (2018).

## Data on domestic violence in France

There are two sources of data on domestic violence, administrative (police) and victimization surveys. Before the 2000s, there was little French data—police and survey—on domestic violence. In surveys, there had been a question about rape and sexual assault in the public studies of sexual behaviour in 1992 (ACSF) and 1994 (ACSJ), but no dedicated survey on DV/IPV. Meanwhile, police/justice data were notoriously poor. In the 1990s, police data did not indicate the gender of the perpetrator, and justice data only focused on the perpetrator. It was thus impossible to assess the extent of domestic violence. In 1997, the French government, pressured by both activists and international norms after the Fourth World Women Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), commissioned a survey, which was finalized in 2000 as Enveff (*Enquête nationale sur les violences faites aux femmes en France*). In 2003, the murder of a famous actress by her rock star companion created an enormous scandal and put DV/IPV on the agenda.

### Victimization Data

The pioneer study is Enveff (2000). 6,970 women, age 20-59, were interviewed by telephone and asked about psychological, sexual and physical violence. The theoretical underpinnings of Enveff are in the "violence against women" framework. Enveff found that 2,3 % of women were victims of physical violence in the household.

The successor of Enveff is *Virage* ("*Violences et rapports de genre*", 2015), with a sample of 27,268, 15,556 women et 11,712 men aged 20-69 (first in France proper, then with a follow-up in the overseas territories in 2016). An important difference between Enveff and Virage is that Virage interviews also men. Virage aims at better

capturing the combination of gender-based violence with emerging issues of ethnicity and disability. Virage follows a holistic approach to violence victimization, asking questions about violence in the family, by the partner, in public space, in the work space, and at school; and has a greater sensibility to psychological and verbal violence than the main public survey (CVS, see below). Enveff and Virage have a strong visibility in French academia and the nonprofit sector.

|   | Women            |                      | Men           |                      |
|---|------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
|   | At least<br>once | More than five times | At least once | More than five times |
| Has insulted you, humiliated you,<br>criticized your physical appearance,<br>opinions or skills | 2,3              | 2,3                  | 0,3           | 0,3                  |
| Has brutally shaken you, hit you, or committed other act of brutality                           | 2,9              | 1,5                  | 0,3           | 0,1                  |
| Forced you to touch genitals, or forcibly tried to have sex                                     | 0,8              | 0,4                  | <0,1          | n.s.                 |

| Table 1: Domestic violence in the current relationship, in the last 12 months, by sex (%) | ) |
|---|---|
|   |   |

Source: Violences et rapports de genre, 2015

Since 2007, there is another source of victimization data, *CVS* ("Cadre de vie et sécurité"), which is co-organized by the French statistical authority (INSEE), the ONDRP and the Ministry of Interior's statistics department (SSMSI). Since 2007, CVS annually surveys circa 23,000 respondents. CVS is a general victimization survey which investigates most forms of crime (including for instance burglaries). Its theoretical orientation is traditionally criminological. It uses a narrower definition of domestic violence than Enveff / Virage, with more direct questions, and yields lower estimates of domestic violence, although, since 2014, it asks about the psychological, verbal and administrative aspects of IPV. It surveys respondents age 18-75. It is conducted face-to-face, and some questions are asked through headphones, to make sure that family members cannot overhear the questions. CVS has high response rates and high quality responses because of the attention to details put in the research protocol. It over-samples poor neighbourhoods, and can be administered in other languages than French (e.g., Arabic or Soninké).

|   | Total   | Women   |
|---|---------|---------|
| Domestic violence victims                                 | 295 000 | 213 000 |
| Among which: victims of physical violence only            | 227 000 | 152 000 |
| Among which: victims of sexual violence only              | 34 000  | 30 000  |
| Among which: victims of both physical and sexual violence | 34 000  | 31 000  |
| Share of victims among 18-75 year olds                    | 0,7%    | 0,9%    |
| Share of women among victims                              | 72%     | 100%    |
| Share of victims pressing charges                         | 14%     | 18%     |

#### Table 2: Domestic violence: yearly averages for 2011-2018.

Source: "Cadre de vie et sécurité" survey, 2019.

There are other ventures of more limited scope in survey research that touch upon domestic and/or sexual violence. The French Ministry of Health has commissioned a survey on sexual behavior where questions are asked about sexual assault and rape; the department of Seine Saint-Denis (northeastern *banlieue* of Paris) also commissioned a study of violence against female teenagers and young adults (called CSVF, 2007).

## Police data

Police data in France historically are notoriously poor, in part because police officers have little time to dedicate to inputting quality information, in part because softwares have inherent limitations, and in part because many governments have taken an active step in manipulating data towards political ends. In 2003 the ONDRP was created to analyze police and justice data, and in 2014 the SSMSI was created within the Ministry of Interior to improve the quality of police statistics. The SSMSI is headed by a statistician, not a police officer. Since 2014, it collects data from both the police and the gendarmerie. It is certified as a credible statistics organization by the European Union.



Source : SSMSI, Base des victimes de crimes et délits 2018; traitements SSMSI.

# Figure 1: Number of domestic violence victims according to police and gendarmerie data in 2018, per 1000 residents

Today, police data are collected in the following manner. Victims in France may ask to simply register their claim ("main courante", no formal charges and no investigation) or to formally press charges.

The first option, "main courante", is originated either by victims themselves, who wish to let the police register that something happened without formally pressing charges, or by the police officers themselves who report on what they have seen and done on patrol (they fill in a "gestion d'événement"). All this goes into the MCI, a software that looks outdated and difficult to use and less precise than the software that manages formal charges. The Ministry of Interior's SSMSI does not use these data, but the Gendarmerie, at the department-level, may use them to get an idea of territorial trends.

The second option is to press charges, which may happen in any police station (where the victim lives, where the incident happened, or elsewhere), or with the prosecutor's office. Charges are filed by the investigating police officer into a software called the LRPPN (Logiciel de Rédaction des Procédures de la Police Nationale) or the LRPGN (for the Gendarmerie). Every time a victim presses charges, the police officer inputs into the LRPP/GN all sorts of information about the assumed nature of the crime, the relationship between perpetrator and victim, questions of gender, age and nationality, which are statistically usable.

A source of bias is that the low quality of the information that is filed into the LRPP/GN. In dense urban regions, police receive too many complaints. Investigators are overburdened and often do not fill in the forms as diligently as they should, because there are too many items. Investigators routinely misrepresent the crime's nature ("nature d'infraction"), or fill in wrong information because it is the first one in the multiple choices that appears in the drop-down menu (this is a common problem to drop-down menus, not specific to the French police). Ministry of Interior statisticians consider that data about domestic violence is usable since 2015.

Another source of bias is the police practice of "codes Q", which consists in using a range of subterfuges to make criminal charges disappear from official statistics, so as to avoid unfavorable-looking crime numbers. According to informal sources within the French police, in the early 2010s, up to 7-10 % of charges pressed to the police could thus disappear. It is unclear how much the practice persists or whether it is possible for Ministry of Interior statisticians to reconstruct "codes Q".

Another source of bias is the variations in police practices. In some precincts, police officers use a specific questionnaire when a victim press charges for DV which is designed to clarify what is it exactly that the charges are about, because victims often don't know that specific behaviors are penal infractions. But in other precincts, these questionnaires are perceived by officers as inducing responses and spurring inflated complaints, and are therefore not used.

Another concern pertains to the definition of DV. The options to qualify the infractions in the LRPP/GN do not allow for making a distinction between, on the one hand, common disputes in socially disadvantaged households where alcohol is consumed in great quantities, and on the other hand more insidious dynamics of control which may or may not be violent. Police officers often empirically know the difference, but the software does not allow for such specifications.

Another source of bias derives from the organization of justice in France. In short, small crimes are judged by all-professional courts (*tribunal correctionnel*), while serious crimes are judged by popular juries (*cour d'assises*). Popular juries are expensive, cumbersome, difficult to organize, and unpredictable in their decisions. Legal professionals are dismayed that wily defense lawyers are able to persuade gullible popular juries in spite of hard evidence. As a consequence, there is an understanding among police and justice professionals that is it best to recast serious crimes into less serious crimes, so as to have them judged by the professional *correctionnel*, and to have confidence that at least some justice will be served. This means that attempted murders are routinely recast as assault, rapes as sexual aggressions, incurring lesser penalties, but with greater certainty of conviction.

Another (hopefully final) concern is that is difficult to follow charges pressed to the police/gendarmerie to their effective judicial treatment by prosecutors. All cases are relabeled, put into another software, so as to preserve the sanctity of judicial decisions over police records—based on the legal theory that police charges are not enough to make a defendant guilty, that only court proceedings can establish judicial guilt. It is thus difficult to know which crime qualification is eventually used by prosecutors, whether prosecutors tend to requalify DV cases in stronger or milder terms, how frequently prosecutors drop cases, etc.

In addition to regular police data, the Délégation aux Victimes at the Ministry of Interior presents since 2004 a yearly report of all the women killed by their partner in France, which provides an accurate account of the number of women killed and of the circumstances.



**Figure 2: Total homicide and feminicide rate in France, 1994-2019.** (Source: authors' calculation based on DAV and Ministry of interior data.)

# The frontline response

In France, as in other EU member countries, the development of policies to combat DVs at local level essentially relies on the setting and diffusion of two types of organizational arrangements.

The first type of arrangement is a specialized DV unit that is set up within a larger organization with more a general mission, such as law enforcement agencies, hospitals or social services. The second type of arrangement is an interorganizational structure intended to provide a framework for partnership cooperation against DV.

Most government agencies that play a role in addressing DVs have developed specialized unit and/or staff. This is true in particular for law enforcement agencies. For example, the gendarmerie has set up a network of 1,600 local crime prevention officers (about one per gendarmerie station, there are approximately 120 000 gendarmes in France). They are responsible for taking care of victims who come at the gendarmerie station, for interviewing them properly, for directing them towards the right support providers, for assessing the risk to the victim, for investigating DV cases, for facilitating information sharing on women at risk among the various gendarmerie units of the *département*, for raising awareness among their colleagues on the issue of DV's, and for representing the gendarmerie in grassroots inter-agency cooperation at the municipal level.

In addition, to improve the quality of criminal investigations of intimate partner violence cases, specialized detective units have been set up in gendarmerie stations and headquarters (at the *département* level), such as the "family protection brigades" which were created in 2009 in each *département* (the département is a French political and administrative-territorial level, of which there are about a hundred in France, *département* police and gendarmerie directorates are the main level of command for local police forces).

The French national police followed the same evolution, creating victim assistance desks, victim support officers or managers (about 800 in the whole country, the National Police has about 150 000 police officers), and DV investigation groups in a growing number of jurisdictions (there is about 200 family protection brigades in

the French National Police employing 1300 specially trained detectives). At the same time, victim support associations and legal aid NGOs have set up information desks in many police stations and most courts of justice, which are staffed by volunteers or employees trained to respond to the specific needs of DV victims. These associations, which are themselves subsidized by the public authorities, also provide training to police officers on the prevention and fight against DV, further contributing to the commitment and specialization of dedicated law enforcement professionals. In a similar way, hospitals have established clearly identified and specially trained health professionals to whom other hospital staff members can refer when they are confronted with hard DV cases.

Our field observations show that there is a clear difference in the quality of care provided to victims depending on whether their case is handled by a specialist or by a generalist. By "specialist", we mean police officers (or social workers, or medical professionals) whose job specialty consists in handling domestic violence cases. By "generalist", this deliverable refers to those police officers (or social workers, or medical professionals) who indifferently handle all the cases that they encounter in their work.

Generalists will typically be less knowledgeable about domestic violence, less inclined to take non-physical violence seriously, more inclined to rely on personal discretion, and less likely to make informed and helpful referrals. Conversely, specialists will be better trained, knowledgeable about the different types of violence, abuse and control dynamics—and the risks they entail, more likely to follow protocols and procedures design to safeguard the victim's interests, and more likely to be part of a network of professionals from other sectors who will be themselves more likely to help the victim in their multifaceted needs.

The deficit of inter-agency cooperation has been identified as one of the main limitations of French efforts to combat domestic violence since the mid-2000s. It was at this time that the development of local partnerships between stakeholders involved in supporting victims became one of the main orientations of French policies in that domain. During the last decade, local policy arrangements and tools for information sharing, coordination, and day to day collaboration have been set up in a growing number of localities. These cooperation schemes and devices take a variety of forms: social workers or psychologists in police stations specifically tasked with bridging the gap between law enforcement agencies and social services; official or informal multi-agency workgroups dedicated to steering and implementing local prevention and law enforcement policies; establishment of state officials in charge of organizing and animating networks of public and non-governmental actors; setting up of interagency protocols and contact persons to ensure continuity of care for victims despite the multiplicity of support providers.

In France, there is a profusion of actors who can claim to coordinate the provision of services to victims of domestic violence at the local level. Local government officials in charge of women's rights, prosecutors, prefects, police chiefs, local victims support committees of the Ministry of Justice, municipal crime prevention and public safety committees, all have been given the mission to coordinate the action of the various stakeholders by different directives taken at different times. Fortunately, not all of them are ready to assume this mission with the same level of commitment. In some places, one of these authorities manages to make its leadership recognized by others, through expertise, commitment and diplomacy. In other places, several authorities are competing for leadership. In some localities, no partnership emerges and the various stakeholders continue to work separately or in a loosely coordinated manner.

One of the most effective arrangements that has been developed in France involves both specialization and inter-agency cooperation. These are social workers operating in police stations and gendarmerie units.

The idea of setting up embedded social workers in police and gendarmerie stations came up in the early 1980s, following a governmental white paper which putted the stress on the social dimension of police work: the Belorgey report on police reforms (1982). This report highlighted that the police did not take action when facing information on the social distress of victims who came to the police station. The potential of police information as a trigger of social intervention and victim support was not exploited. This report recommended to consider a device to fill this gap.

It appeared quickly that the simple transmission of written information to social services was not enough to trigger proper social services intervention. It became clear that the only effective solution was the complete information of a social worker by the police as well as the presence of this social worker in the police/gendarmerie station, so that this social worker can directly collect the additional elements he or she needs to process the case. Hence the idea of embedding a social worker in the police station to collect in real time all information related to police interventions and to use this information to provide support to victims.

The first thoughts on this subject date back to 1986. The objective was that victims present in the police/gendarmerie station could be seen, on site and without delay, by a social worker, in order to provide immediate responses to his/her need for assistance. The first attempts, in 1988 and 1989, failed mainly because of the resistance of social workers. This resistance decreased when social workers were guaranteed that their professional ethics would be fully respected. It was decided that the embedded social worker would continue to belong to the social services of the *département*. The police station promised to provide the social worker with an office and to provide him/her with all the necessary equipment and information.

The first successful experiences took place in the years 1991-1993 despite the refusal of some *département* councils to finance the scheme and despite the unwillingness of some police stations to integrate social worker (considered by some police officers as an ideological enemy) into their midst. The missions of the embedded social workers were defined by a 2006 guidelines establishing a reference framework for the "Intervenant social en commissariats de police et unites de gendarmerie" (ISCG – social worker in police stations and gendarmerie units). According to this guidelines, the main tasks of ISCG are: to assess the nature of the social needs that are detected during police activity; to carry out social intervention, as a matter of urgency if necessary; educational or social mediation activities; technical assistance, support, and information activities; and to facilitate the person's access to social services and to their social rights. The function was enshrined in law in 2007 (Article L 121.1.1 of the Code of social action and families). In 2019, there is 261 ISCG in France and 73 psychologists working in police stations.

Embedded social workers have leeway to define their missions and not all do exactly the same things. They are often involved with improving the likelihood of reporting. After police interventions for DV, embedded social workers call the victims to motivate her to come to the police station to report the crime (if any). These callbacks are scheduled even if the incident doesn't lead to an arrest or a formal procedure.

An embedded social worker spend a considerable amount of time analysing police reports and victims' statements in search of "red flags", of signals of at-risk situation — for instance death threats, knife attacks, schizophrenia, alcohol and drugs, violence in front of children — any sign of a situation that may potentially escalate in high-impact domestic violence.

The main function of embedded social workers is to assist the police in handling domestic violence victims. This means soothing victims and talking them into filing a report with the police. They provide social assistance to victims—helping them with housing and children, explaining to them what happens next, reassuring them or managing their expectations, putting them in contact with NGOs or psychologists, and so on, so that police officers can focus on the strictly policejudicial aspects of the case. This enables police officers to build more solid cases with more cooperative victims, with greater judicial consequences, while at the same time providing victims with basic psychological assistance and referrals to core services, thus greatly improving victims' experiences with the police.

The policy of hiring embedded social workers in police stations clearly fits international recommendations. As female civilians, embedded social workers help diversifying the workforce. We see embedded social workers as a clear example of best practice in the sense that it is a concrete step in improving the quality of the handling of domestic violence by the police. It is not a cost-neutral-policy: it requires the hiring of a full time employee for one or two police stations, depending on caseload. But it delivers tangible benefits which are easily replicable. The main problem is the issue of making people from the world of social work fit into the world of police officers.

Social workers and police officers belong to two different professional cultures where tacit assumptions about what constitutes normal collegial behaviour differ. Embedded social workers usually manage, with a steep learning curve during their first year in the police station, to figure out the do's and the don'ts. The main culture shock comes from the issue of information sharing. Embedded social workers need to have access to reports and victims' statements, but in the police world, these documents are not to be shared with outsiders. After a few years, embedded social workers come to know the police organization from the inside, and are able to use the most obscure acronyms to good effect. But mistakes happen, and sometimes these mistakes cause irreparable damage to certain personal relationships, which in turn can severely hinder the social worker' ability to effectively work with her police partners.

The specializations logics within organizations involved in combating DV take various forms in different local jurisdictions, despite the efforts of the national management to impose uniform standards and practices throughout the country.

Each local dynamic generates a specific network of specialized professionals. This network can be developed within one of the many existing official schemes, but it can also be structured in an ad hoc way by adopting an original and unique configuration, functioning and leadership. One of the consequences of this variety of local arrangements is that a part of the know-how of specialized professionals is relevant only in the local context in which they practice, especially the expertise dealing with working together with other local stakeholders. This is why the training initiatives put in place at the local level by local actors play an important role in the specialization process of DV first responders.

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