

## Case Study on Gender Based Violence in Carana

Carana is a country where gender based violence remains a controversial topic. The debate focuses mainly on domestic violence which both influential political groups and religious leaders consider as a matter to be solved privately in the family sphere, not a crime to be processed by the judicial system. Civil society organisations have however lobbied for criminalisation of domestic violence for decades. As a result a law against domestic violence was passed in 2014. The Law establishes that emotional and physical abuse is a crime and that the police is to create a dedicated department for investigation of domestic violence cases. The Law further states that the Ministry of Justice should assign specialised prosecutors to lead investigations in domestic violence cases.

In spite of progress in policy making, big challenges remain. A survey conducted by UNDP in 2017 indicated that 37 % of women and girls in Carana had experienced one or more forms of neglect, emotional or physical abuse in their homes. (The survey did not gather any statistics for men or boys). Considering that the population of Carana is 6 million, at least 1 million women and girls in Carana suffered from abuse in their homes in 2017. The number of cases reported to the police was however less than 100.

When interviewing women about the reasons for the low level of reporting they describe a number of reasons why they would hesitate to contact the police to report domestic violence:

- Dependence on the husband and his family for survival. Difficult to find affordable accommodation and sustain herself and her children if she would leave. There are very few shelters or safe houses and they are not available for more than a few nights.
- Fear of being ostracized and seen as bad person by both her family and the community. The social norm is for a woman to stay and take care of the family.
- Fear of losing custody of her children if she would leave her husband.
- Low confidence in the police. Many officers have the attitude that women have themselves to blame if they get beaten and should go home and sort out their problems with their husband.
- Some feeling intimidated to make their statement to a male officer. There are very few women working in the police. The Carana police has only 3% women. Most of them work in administrative positions and not as investigators, so the chance of meeting with a women investigator is minimal.
- Cumbersome and challenging procedures. Having to tell her story many times to different officials and feeling questioned and exposed.

The reluctance to report have lead to few cases being investigated and few perpetrators being prosecuted or brought to justice. The NGOs and activists who fought hard for the new legislation are disillusioned and claim that there is in practice impunity for domestic violence in Carana.