



**LA  
STRADA**  
Moldova

**International Center  
for Women's Rights Protection and  
Promotion "La Strada"**

**Activity REPORT  
2019  
January-December**

**Programme:** Issues Affecting Women

**Area:** Violence against women and domestic violence

**Strategic Goal 1.** To contribute to streamlining implementation of national **anti-trafficking policies**, securing that the rights of all trafficked persons and at-risk group are protected in practice in Moldova, and specifically to:

**// To contribute to reducing vulnerability of at-risk groups to continuous threats of human trafficking //**

The **national awareness campaign "Information First!"** targeted potential Moldovan labour migrants and focused on the risk of labor exploitation and forced labour. The scenarios were based on the frequently asked questions and reported cases to the national Hot-Line on safe migration and anti-trafficking 0 800 77777 (ATHL). The video spots (A) and (B) have been specially tailored to familiarize the migrants about signs of possible risks and encouraged to call the HI for information before departure. The video spots were broadcasted on TV stations with national coverage, 1000 posters were distributed to local public authorities throughout the country, 400 posters have been placed at all border crossing points and 4000 leaflets were distributed via Border Police to migrants on the road. The campaign [Report](#) comprises conclusions and observations about risks of forced labor and labor exploitation based on the calls received and counseled at the ATHL.

The new improved interface of the national informational platform [www.migratiesigura.md](http://www.migratiesigura.md) was launched in 2019. The platform has its own identity, operates in more friendly formula for visitors, has new content adapted to the trends and FAQs about safe migration for various purposes and ways to seek and get protection and assistance. During 2019, the portal registered 23k visitors (30% increase compared to 2018) of which 19k are unique visitors (56% increase compared to 2018). The number of online consultations tripled reaching to 158.

The **Anti-trafficking and safe migration Hot-Line** registered 18 521 calls related to safe migration of which 17185 calls regard the employment opportunities available with the Bilateral Agreement RM-Israel. Other 1336 calls reflect prevention calls on migration for various purposes as well as information calls. The data and information about the ATHL and trends are reflected in the traditional [Hot-Line Fact Sheet](#).

During reporting period, La Strada continued to facilitate implementation of the **Bilateral Agreement between the RM and Israel on temporary employment of workers from RM** in specific sectors in the State of Israel. La Strada services included information and guidance to interested candidates, logistics all phases from selection to departure. Due to this agreement and La Strada services, over 1570 men, Moldovan citizens, have been facilitated employment in the construction sector in fair and protected conditions.

**// To secure accessibility to protection and support services for all trafficked persons //**

During the reported period, 73 SOS calls have been registered, concerning the situation of 82 stranded migrants including 23 presumed victims of THB, 8 missing/presumed trafficked persons and 51 persons in various difficult situation or victims of associated crimes (smuggling, domestic violence, sexual violence, violation of labor rights/forced labor, etc.). Of those 23 persons identified as presumed victims of THB, 22 are women and 1 is a man. People were allegedly trafficked for sexual, labor and implication in criminal activities in Greece, Italy, United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Russia. Due to prompt intervention of the ATHL counselors, at least 12 victims have been safely repatriated from Greece and United Arab Emirates in close cooperation with the partners.

## // To support the Government in streamlining national anti-trafficking policies //

In the light of the Government Decision (GD) on reforming the current system of planning, monitoring and evaluation of all the national policies in Moldova and based on the conclusions of the review report "Regulating and reforming the process of planning & monitoring national policies in the Republic of Moldova" prepared by La Strada experts, it was recommended to suspend the development of the monitoring tool of the AT Strategy and rather focus on the development of the **monitoring mechanism for the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Crime (NRMV) Strategy 2020-2030** which is in its final stage of approbation by the Government.

La Strada Moldova prepared National Peer Review Note to the draft report "Assessment of the capacity of the DPS of the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova to coordinate CT policies and of the feasibility of the introduction of a National Rapporteur on Combating THB in Moldova" with recommendations for improvement of the existing CT coordination mechanism. Additionally, La Strada Moldova provided recommendations on existing gaps and challenges to the Government of Moldova through different channels and methods: participation in the meetings of National CT Committee, Technical Coordination Groups called by DPS, open letters, contributions to the State Report on the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan of Action (2018 – 2022), etc. As a result of such massive advocacy efforts the number of CT issues (e.g. imposing penalties on VoTs for their involvement in unlawful activities committed, when they have been trafficked; problems in VoTs' access to medical assistance; gaps in concluding and implementation bilateral agreements in the field of labor migration; not-paying compensation for VoTs, etc.) stay high on agenda of the Government and have more chances to be tackled.

La Strada Moldova continued contributing to the **protection of the rights of the 3<sup>rd</sup> country nationals VOTs**, by assessing their vulnerability to THB and exploitation and the capacity of the CT system to identify and assist them. During reporting period, draft Report has been finalized and validated within a round-table with key CT and migration policy stakeholders in October 2019. The key findings of the research have been shared with the DPS along with recommendations to include the relevant measures in the next CT National Action Plan for 2021-2023. It was decided to organize a special inter-agency meeting focused on the issues of identification of trafficked persons among 3<sup>rd</sup> country nationals. The final [Report](#) is available in 2 languages: printed version in Romanian and e-version in English, which is available on the website of La Strada Moldova. In addition, a [Summary Report](#) (Ro) with visual data on key findings and recommendations was prepared for easy reading. La Strada Moldova is planning to present the main findings and recommendations of the research to the public on the occasion of the European Anti-trafficking Day.

La Strada Moldova continued supporting the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy (MHLSP) in adjustment of **National Referral System (NRS) to needs of other categories of victims of crimes**. In particular upon request of the MHLSP it has become a main author of the complex policy document on the creation of the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Crime (NRMV) in Moldova. NRMV represents the advanced version of NRS, the complex model of inter-sectorial cooperation for the realization of trafficked persons' rights that was established in 2008-2016. In response to current development, the model was adjusted to the needs of other categories victims of crimes (victims of domestic violence, torture, sexual crimes, etc.) and thus assistance to victims of THB was integrated into a wider national mechanism. The new policy document was presented and validated at 2 workshops with participation of national CT stakeholders in autumn 2019. The elaboration of the NRMV Concept was applauded by CEDAW and it was noted as the significant achievement in the CT field of 2019 by the *National Report the implementation of the 2019 policy for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings*.

La Strada Moldova put a lot of advocacy efforts to make the Government to include the NRMV approbation into the Government priority plan, which is an important measure due to the political instability in Moldova. As a result, according to the *Action Plan of the Government for 2020-2023*, para 6.9.3 (Government Decision No.636 dtd.11.12.19) the draft NRMV Concept is to be submitted for official approval in September 2020.

Further, La Strada Moldova has also elaborated all supporting documents for the NRMV Strategy: (i) *Action Plan (2020-2023)* for its implementation, (ii) Government Decision, (iii) Explanatory Note, (iv) Assessment of the expected impact, (v) Logical framework with indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the NRMV Strategy.

La Strada has distributed the results of the assessment of national AT response in 2018 by the **USA Department of State (Trafficking in Persons Report)** and called the national authorities to strengthen efforts in this area. <sup>1</sup> La Strada experts have also prepared its independent reply to the *Questionnaire for the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Moldova* and shared it with **GRETA**. Besides, LA STRADA elaborated corresponding recommendations on measures to be taken on national level to follow up GRETA's conclusions in the framework of the 3-rd evaluation round in Moldova.

**Strategic Goal 2.** To ensure that **the rights of women affected by violence and of at-risk groups** are respected, protected and fulfilled in practice in Moldova and specifically to:

**// To raise awareness of the general public towards violence against women and to reduce vulnerability of women and girls to domestic violence and sexual violence //**

During 2019, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, La Strada provided mentorship and coaching to 15 lyceum teachers who decided to continue with the **Family Harmonious Relationships school course** on their own. The FHR copy books for students were printed, enabling the FHR course to reach over 600 young people from 8 rayons. At the same time, La Strada maintains continuous communication with the FHR teachers' community that today consists of over 60 teachers from over 23 rayons of the country. Professional advice, tips and materials were made available. *Both students and teachers highly appreciate the content of the course, considering it to be a life skill and an opportunity for development. Although it is an optional course, teachers report an almost full attendance among students.*

In November 2019, the **National Trust-Line for Women and Girls** has marked its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over 19000 calls were counseled during this period. In 2019, 2131 calls were counseled, out of which 1240 (58%) reflect cases of domestic violence. In 98% of cases, the aggressor is the intimate partner of the women and in 2% of the calls the aggressor is the adult child of the victim. In the majority of cases reported, the aggressors are men. Physical violence continues to be most recognized and reported; physical violence is also a trigger for reporting psycho-emotional violence. Other forms of violence, such as economic or sexual violence, although admitted by victims, continue to be underreported. Women calling the Trust-line continue to request psychological support, legal assistance & representation and safe housing. Sexual violence was the subject of 79 calls (4% of total) regarding 37 new cases. The number of reports to the Trust-Line about sexual violence continues to increase (in 2018 69 calls were registered from 27 women and girls). Of the 37 victims of sexual offences, 27 were adults, and 10 were children. Victims are primarily women and girls of ages varying from 13 to 91-years-old. In 80% of cases, the adult victims called the Trust-Line themselves, while in the cases of minors, it is the parents or community professionals who called and sought assistance. Rape is the most reported form of sexual violence, representing 80% of cases. In 2019, the first calls related to sexual violence by intimate partner and violence committed by means of ICT were registered. The calls refer to 3 cases of revenge porn/sexortion, in an attempt to force the woman to stay in a relationship with the aggressor. Thus, ICTs are used to exercise pressure on the woman, forcing

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://lastrada.md/rom/articole/departamentul-de-stat-al-sua-guvernul-rm-nu-a-respectat-standardele-minime-in-mai-186> and

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/centrul-interna%C8%9Bional-la-strada-moldova/departamentul-de-stat-al-sua-guvernul-rm-nu-a-respectat-standardele-minime-%C3%AEn-do/2315780638695317/>

her to accept or continue the relationship. Detailed information about the activity and analysis of the calls received and counseled at the National Trust-Line for Women and Girls is available in the [annual Trust Line Report](#).

**// To ensure availability of and accessibility to specialized services and legal protection for women and girls victims of SV and DV in contact with justice system //**

4000 copies of brochures addressed to women who have suffered from sexual abuse were distributed via front-line police stations, health and forensics specialists all over the country. The brochure includes information reflecting FAQ and recommendations about what to do and not to do right after the abuse, what services are available to them and how to access them, information about their rights and legal protection leverages, as well as services of the National Trust Line 0 8008 8008 as a National Sexual Assault Hotline.

The **Women Safeguarding Team** of La Strada professional legal assistance to 98 women suffering from various forms of violence. Most of the cases were referred from the Trust-Line for Women and Girls and from the police station Nr. 3 from Buicani district, Chisinau municipality. Another 55 women benefited from specialized counseling and 42 benefited from professional legal services in court. The criminal cases included sexual assaults, domestic violence, and violation of protection order and inviolability of private life. Civil cases reflect the legal representation for divorce, child custody and alimony. During 2019, the number of referrals to the Women Safeguarding Team from the law enforcement and judiciary representatives has increased. This is particularly regarding high profile cases. Thus, in 8 cases of sexual assault and 2 cases of domestic violence, Psychological Evaluation Reports, psychological counseling, legal advice and legal representation of victim's rights in court as well as emotional support for the victims during court proceedings was requested.

During the reporting period, two cases are prepared by the La Strada lawyer for **strategic litigation**. The first case concerns a case of domestic violence that ended with the murder of the victim. The murder was a consequence of a series of inactions from the police and prosecutor from Chisinau. The second case to be filed for inefficient investigations to failure to ensure adequate protection for victims of sexual assault (article 3 of the Convention), represent a case of rape of a 21 year old woman, committed in 2015.

The Trust-Line crisis protocols provide for direct contact with the community police and social protection authorities and services to enforce **emergency intervention in cases of domestic violence**. During 2019, emergency interventions were required in 155 cases reported to the TL, including 148 cases of domestic violence and 7 cases of sexual violence. These represent 25% of the overall TL case load in 2019. Most solicited and necessary immediate support is safe accommodation and immediate legal aid. In all other cases, referral to specialized services is ensured following an assessment of the risks involved and the needs of each individual victim.

**// To contribute to the development of capacities of professionals to effectively address cases of violence against women, DV and SV //**

The specially **designed training course (16 hours) on investigation and judgment of sexual assault crimes** (developed and piloted within the previous reporting period) has been institutionalized within the National Institute of Justice, while a consolidated team of 8 experts-trainers for the 2 above mentioned courses continue to be active and dedicated.

<https://www.inj.md/plan-calendaristic-modular-de-formare-continuu%C4%83-semesterul-i-%C3%AEn-anul-2019-compilat>

<https://www.inj.md/plan-calendaristic-modular-de-formare-continuu%+C4%83-semesterul-i-%C3%AEn-anul-2019-compilat>

<https://www.inj.md/ro/node/7523>

During 2019 alone, **92 prosecutors, judges and legal counselors have applied for and benefited from the training course** organized in partnership with the National Institute of Justice. 60% of participants who have applied to participate in the seminars already have experience in assisting cases of sexual assault, while 40 % are new to the system. The agenda is primarily based on analysis of real case studies selected by the GPO as part of 2018 case-workload analysis. New cases from EGHR vs. Moldova on sexual assault were also presented and discussed. Trainees are also encouraged to share the cases that they have worked with and challenges they experienced in order to facilitate case-based discussions in big groups.

In 2019, 10 **seminars (8 hours each) have been organized for 192 frontline police officers**, including district police, investigators and patrol officers from around the country. The seminars have been organized in cooperation with the General Police Inspectorate. The agenda used real case studies for discussions and drew on the personal experience of participants for sharing good practices, discussing challenges, but also breaking stereotypes. Video materials have been used to boost discussions.

Two seminars on the subject "**Forensic medical response** to cases of sexual assault" (8 hours each) for 60 members of forensic medical staff has been organized and accredited by the Ministry of Health, Social Protection and Family. Trainees represented all forensic centers across Moldova. The trainers build the education process on depersonalized forensic reports on sexual assault. While the resistance of the forensic experts to the issue of sexual violence and the stereotypes regarding the consent is higher comparing to the resistance of the judges and prosecutors, more than 70% of the participants appreciated the seminar as very useful and interesting.

All participants involved in the capacity building events received a course handbook with cases and guidance and a **pocket guideline on efficient communication with victims of sexual assaults**. 900 extra copies have been printed and distributed to all police inspectorates around the country.

*Following trainings, the number of requests for assistance from the victims assistance team of La Strada (forensic psychologists and specialized lawyer) in cases of sexual assault has increased by 25%; more prosecutors and judges request psychological evaluation reports on sexual assault cases while the attorney/lawyer assisting the victims noticed an improvement on the investigation and judgment of these types of cases (the procedures are respected, the questions addressed to the victims are ethical and trauma centered).*

## **// To contribute to enhancing Government response to DV and SV //**

By the end of 2019, the **draft law on amending the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedural Code related to sexual assault crimes** came to its final version reflecting the opinion of both the WG created in 2017, as well as the opinion of additional independent experts called by the MJ. The Ministry of Justice has communicated that it is ready to undergo official public consultations in the last phase before reaching out to the Government for approval. This achievement was reached despite the tense and unstable political situation in the country, with constant changes of senior and midlevel managers as well as changes in agenda of key Government ministries/agencies.

During 2019, La Strada representatives actively participated in all 4 meetings organized by the **National Inter-ministerial Council for prevention and combating Domestic Violence and Violence against Women** (hereafter National Coordination Council). The main topics discussed this year were:

- the amendment of Law nr. 105 from 14.06.2018 on promoting employment and unemployment insurance and the implementation mechanism of this law for the vulnerable categories including victims of domestic violence, validation of the course "Forensic examination of victims of violence

- against women” for the medical staff and pharmaceuticals, curriculum for students (30 hours) and for the continuous medical education (50 hours);
- Approval of the report on implementation of the NAP 2018-2020 (report for 2018) and discussing the postponed activities. During the meeting, the SART development has been discussed with the representatives from the MIA, General Prosecutor Office and La Strada. All parties agreed that in order to advance the SART, the precondition is that the draft law on sexual assault should be approved;
  - Discussion the relevance and the necessity to elaborate the femicide monitoring mechanism following the UN special rapporteur on VAW; and the best practices on social services procurement by public authorities and the necessity to revised the existing mechanism on public procurement in order to increase the accessibility of NGO service providers to the public funds.
  - The last meeting was dedicated to the coordination of the national efforts for the campaign on 16 days Campaign Orange the World: „Generation Equality Stands against Rape!”

During 2019, La Strada representatives contributed to the high-level working group on **harmonization of the national legislation on DV in line with the Istanbul Convention under the MHLSP**. The WG has developed a draft law covering the proposed amendments to more than 11 normative acts (Criminal Code, Criminal Procedural Code, Civil Code, Civil prevention and combating domestic violence, Law Nr. 137 on rehabilitation of victims of crimes, Law nr. 198 on free legal aid guaranteed by the state and Law Nr. 1585 on mandatory medical insurance). The aim of the draft law is to increase protection of the victims, increase accountability of perpetrators and streamline inter-sectorial cooperation mechanisms. The validated draft law has been sent by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection to all relevant central public authorities for the endorsement in December 2019.

La Strada has assisted the General Criminal Investigation Department in developing the internal version on **investigation operational protocol into sexual violence crimes for the police** in 2019. It was agreed that the final version will be updated and circulated throughout the investigation units in the country after the draft law on sexual violence will be approved.

To facilitate inter-sectorial cooperation, as the new protocols would envisage, La Strada facilitated two study visits «Prevention and ensuring a coordinated response in cases on sexual violence” in Serbia and in Spain. The study visits sought to familiarize the representatives of the relevant public institutions with **the concept of SART and its application in practice**. This activity was organized in partnership with UN Women Moldova. The study visits objectives included: (a) learning from the experience of key professionals about the SART mechanism (historical and social premises, impact in time of the policies dedicated to sexual assault, lessons learned related to the design of policies, mechanisms and services); (b) learning from the experience in establishing the sectorial and intersectoral cooperation mechanisms to prevent and eliminate sexual violence (how is the response to sexual assault cases organized, who are the members of the SART model (professional profile) memorandum of understanding, multidisciplinary regulations/SOPs for each professional domains); (c) learn from the experience of key professional about capacity building programs for specialists (who coordinate/organize trainings for professionals how to response to cases of sexual assault); (d) identifying best practices that could be applied by Moldovan authorities in their response to cases of sexual violence. More details about the analysis of best practices conducted by La Strada Moldova and the study visits results are available in the [specialized services for women affected by sexual assault best practices report](#).

On 17 December, 2019 a round table was organized on the topic “[Perspectives of coordinated community response to cases of sexual assault in Moldova](#)” . The event comes as a follow up activity after the study visits in order to validate the recommendations for the Republic of Moldova on how community response to the cases of sexual assault should be organized. The round table was attended by the participants of the study visits and by the representatives of most relevant central authorities as following: General Prosecutor Office, General Inspectorate of Police, General Criminal Investigation Department, Ministry of

Health, Labour Social Protection and Center for Forensic Medical Expertise, specialized lawyers and UN Women representatives.

On February 2019, La Strada organized the **International Workshop “Legal and regulatory framework in the area of combating sexual offenses, Exchange of international practices”** [opened by the Minister of Justice](#) of the RM. Notorious experts from CoE, Sweden and Spain justice systems have familiarized the national justice system stakeholders with recommendations of the GREVIO Committee, especially those related to sexual offenses, and encouraged them to adopt the advanced standards by sharing their own lessons learned, experiences and impact on women and girls after having their laws changed. The Workshop served as the first national forum to present and discuss the national draft law for improvement of the state response in cases of sexual violence based on the compatibility report presented and discussed during the international workshop (available in [Romanian](#) and [English](#) language). The draft law was recognized as a revolutionary one, and enjoyed positive feedback from the justice system representatives present at the event. Over 30 participants representing the justice and law enforcement system - prosecutor offices, police departments, National Institute of Justice, National Council for legal state aid, civil society organization and international organizations took part in the workshop. The event has been highly appreciated by the representative of the Council of Europe and by the participants. It was highlighted that the draft law is a very good result of joint efforts of the members of the working group created and lead by La Strada. The Minister of Justice stated that the Ministry of Justice is ready to propose it to the Government for endorsement. Unfortunately, this action of the Ministry of Justice has been postponed due to political crises in June 2019.

**Denim Day Moldova (Supporting women affected by sexual assault in Sexual Assault Awareness Month)** became an event marked in the calendar of the human rights community of Moldova. More and stronger voices – individual and institutional – join the call of promoting zero tolerance towards sexual violence in the society, encouraging women and girls to ask for assistance and demanding the state to secure better protection for survivors. Traditionally, the 2019 Denim Day Moldova campaign was launched under the slogan “There is no excuse for rape” with messages targeting society constituents and victims of sexual assault using various tools to increase visibility of the issue and remove the individual and societal clichés from this issue. The campaign was designed to shed light onto the hidden and unrecognized forms of sexual violence - [“Voices” Photo Album](#) (English version [here](#)) expressed full support to all victims of sexual assault and reflected on numerous excuses that the society members including professional groups are using to justify abuse and shame/blame the victim. The campaign was among the top 5 news during the launch day with at least 24 media titles (in Romanian and Russian languages) being produced and circulated nationally. Collaborations with mass media brought better quality media messages about the issue of sexual violence against women and girls via thematic articles, radio and TV interviews and shows ([interview radio](#), [emisiune TV](#), [articol online](#) și [interview TV](#)). National opinion leaders (SCOs representatives, Diplomatic missions’ representatives, governmental institutions, journalists) supported the campaign with personal posts in solidarity with victims of sexual assault. School and university students have joined the campaign, organizing flash-mobs in support of victims of sexual abuse.

*Each campaign enjoyed more partners and voices. As a result, media attention also increased - it brought into public space a number of cases of sexual violence that usually would not reach media headlines – cases of sexual violence in health care institutions, education and academia, intimate partner rape. This media attention helped enforce that sexual violence is not just “a women’s problem”, but rather a “society issue”, thus sharing responsibility among all society constituents.*

**Special hearings of the Commission for Human Rights and Interethnic Relations of the Parliament** of the RM, were held on the 25th of July, 2019 and were dedicated to gender based violence priority issues for Moldova. The Commission Chair and its members [have been familiarized](#) with the particularities of the sexual violence situation in the country and raised awareness about the draft Law,



requesting that it makes a subject of a special monitoring effort of the Commission to ensure that the draft law reaches the Parliament in the fall session.

**Art exhibition “Nu dați vina pe haine/Don’t blame the cloths” opened in the Parliament building, on November 27th, 2019.** The exhibition was opened by the deputy chair of the Parliament and chair of the HR Commission, representatives of the US Embassy and UNFPA and was organized as part of the 16 day Campaign Orange the World: „Generation Equality Stands Against Rape!”. The event was meant to increase awareness of MPs about traditional stereotypes around sexual assault, often referred to when judging a case and regretfully putting the blame and shame on the victim. As a follow-up, a call for action was expressed by the Chair of the HR Commission from the Parliament tribune, also asking for a set of materials for all MPs to read, including summary findings of legal case analysis, comparative legal review.

**The open dialog event “Building Partnerships for better protection of victims of sexual violence» was organized on December 2nd, 2019.** Unique in its type, the event served as platform where high-level diplomats active in the RM, leaders of the Government and MPs have conveyed **strong messages** in support of the fight against gender based violence, especially sexual violence against women and girls. Ambassadors of USA, Sweden and France, Chair of the CoE Office in RM, Ministers of Justice and of Health, Social Protection and Family, Chairs of the Parliamentary Commissions of Human Rights and on Social Protection have encouraged all members of the society to join the call as an important exercise to empower the women reach its full potential. During the event the Minister of Justice and MPs have **expressed public commitment** to unseal the legal framework and amend the Criminal law and Criminal Procedural law regarding the sexual assault crimes, to be passed to the Parliament in the nearest period.

In support of the above-mentioned activities and events, La Strada has developed a special info package aiming at presenting the draft Law concept, reasons for key changes and the anticipated impact, including from the experience of other European countries that progressed in this field. It is ultimately expected that the info package will strengthen and build informed support among MPs and officials, decrease possible resistance due to lack of information, knowledge or stereotypes. The package includes: (i) awareness video materials with interviews from national and international field experts, (ii) a set of info cards about major bottlenecks of the legal response system from the perspective of real stories of women’s and girls who have been sexually assaulted and assisted by La Strada women safeguarding team, (iii) Video graphic to raise awareness about the judicial practice on sexual assault cases in the Republic of Moldova, (iv) media messages and press releases.

On 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, the chair of the **Parliamentary Social Protection, Health and Family Commission organized public hearings dedicated to the Human Rights** celebration (December 10) and as a way to conclude the 16 days Campaign Orange the World: „Generation Equality Stands Against Rape!”. Representative NGOs working with victims of domestic violence, relevant ministries and international organizations, individual MPs attended the hearing. Major issues covered by the NGOs in their plea included: transferring the subject of domestic violence and violence against women back in the mandate of the Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights, immediate approbation of two draft laws (draft law on harmonization of the national legislation in the field of DV and VAW and the draft law amending the criminal law and criminal procedural code in the field of sexual assault) as part of country’s preparatory efforts to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, streamlining the state financing mechanism of NGOs, creation of specialized services for victims of sexual violence. A decision was taken to develop a road map covering priority areas of intervention in the field of prevention and combating violence against women for one year and reconvening in December 2020 to evaluate the main achievements. The road map is to be prepared by the Secretariat of the Commission for Social Protection, Health and Family.

An [alternative report to CEDAW Committee](#) was prepared under the aegis of the Coalition "Life without violence" with specific thematic contributions from La Strada covering high profile subjects related to trafficking of women and sexual violence against women and girls.

La Strada representatives participated in a special meeting with **EU Delegation Gender Representative**. The aim of the meeting was to discuss relevant major challenges in the field of gender equality, domestic violence and violence against women and provide recommendations about possible focuses of the EU Delegation in Moldova of the human rights agenda.

UN Women requested consultation with the CSOs (La Strada representatives attend the meeting) on **EU ProDoc consultation on Gender Equality**. The aim of the meeting was to collect all relevant information and solutions/recommendations on what should be done in the next 5 years in the field of Gender Equality and in particular in the field of prevention and combating violence against women.

**// To contribute to decision-making processes by offering relevant information and data to all actors involved in the national response to SV and DV //**

According to the Trust line report from 2019, 2131 calls have been counseled reflecting 715 new cases of DV. The majority of calls are from women (81 %) and the rest (19%) are from men. Combined forms of violence (physical and psychological) are still the most reported by callers, in majority by women (92%). Regarding the needs of the callers who have been counseled via Trust Line, 38% requested legal assistance and representation, 40 % - information and orientation, 20% - psychological counseling and 2% - safe accommodation. More detailed information is available in the [Annual Report](#) in Romanian Language.

According to the La Strada report "[Peculiarities of Sexual Violence in the Republic of Moldova](#)"- victims of sexual crimes are still treated unfairly during criminal proceedings, being subject to discriminatory treatment relative to the guaranteed rights. Although there are many legal provisions describing the rights of victims of sexual crimes, there is no clearly defined cross-sector mechanism to report the cases of sexual violence. Quite often, when lacking health insurance, the victims of sexual crimes cannot benefit from the whole range of necessary care services. There are no specialized services targeting victims of sexual violence. Psychological counseling is one of the most demanded and necessary services for the victims. Currently psychologists provide random counseling services, most frequently within NGOs, while legal aid services are often granted by professionals within centers of assistance to victims of domestic violence or victims of trafficking in persons. In this regard, it is necessary to develop a curriculum on specialized psychological services granted to victims of sexual violence, a steady curriculum, comprising of the actions covered during the first counseling through the last. At present, professionals mention they need special training to provide high quality rehabilitation services to victims of sexual crimes.

**Programme: Issues Affecting Children**

**Area: Child online sexual exploitation and abuse**

**Strategic Goal 3.** To contribute to the development, implementation and improvement of national child protection policies and measures, securing that **the rights of children affected by online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse** and at-risk groups are protected, specifically to:

**// To increase public awareness about COSESA and reduce vulnerability of children in digital environment //**

In 2019, we focused on analyzing the needs and expectations of children regarding the online platform content and its multiplication. For this purpose, we constantly reached out to children by organizing offline activities, engaging them in generating ideas and sharing opinions on all materials and developed content targeting children. **A Children's Advisory Board** was also created to assist the team in this process. Among the first awareness products prepared with the participation of the Children's Advisory Board are a series of videos with peer-to-peer discussions on topics such as online friends and online communication, online reputation, dating with people met online. The Board also participated in the selection of the siguronline Hero for the Instagram page of siguronline, which will be launched in 2020.

In 2019, **Siguronline.md** continued to [be highly accessed by children, with over 48 000 single visitors registered](#), with an especially high number in February due to the SID 2019 Campaign. The "Information and advice" column is the most visited –it is an online resource for everyone interested in online safety issues, providing lots of articles on various topics. Also, the "Cyber Café" Column, which includes online tests and video materials on issues of interest was in the top 3 most accessed pages. The articles mostly accessed by children were about online relationships and online communications. It is important to note that 13% of the portal accesses in 2019 are direct ones. This is an indicator that users have confidence in siguronline.md, since all the direct accesses are linked to the section dedicated to children.

In 2019, Siguronline [registered 544 online requests for counselling](#), representing a 50% increase compared to the previous year. Of these, 62% came from children (340 requests). Girls write on chat more frequently than boys, but the difference is small.. The majority of requests are of a preventative nature. The most frequently brought up questions and issues refer to: general information on how to stay safe online, online relationships and communication, safety of accounts. Based on counseling analysis, children, driven by curiosity, easily accept communication with an unknown person if they believe (and are told) that the person is about the same age as them or that they have common interests. They usually do not take measures to check the identity of their new online friends . Another risky behavior concerns privacy. Children do not know the limit between public and private information, and consequently, they expose themselves to online risks, since all information that is shared could be used by someone intending to take advantage of them.

Compared to 2018, the registered number of requests from children seeking support in cases of online sexual abuse increased almost threefold in 2019- from xxx to 32 cases reported. The majority of them reflect situations of sextortion. From the total number of counselling requests, 7 were reported by children from Romania, these have been referred to our Romanian colleagues from Ora de net. Children experienced online abusive situations primarily due to the lack of knowledge and skills to make smart choices online and avoid risky situations. Children do not consider that sharing of intimate photos is a risky behavior thus they are exposing themselves to potential abusive experiences. In most cases, children who are experiencing online sexual abuse do not have a resource-person of trust who they could talk to and ask for help. Even if they ask for help on Siguronline.md, they tend to avoid talking to their parents or other adults, because they are scared to be shamed and blamed.

During 2019, teachers, who have been trained under the INTERSECTION Program, delivered lessons, seminars and organized extracurricular activities about **Online Safety for over 3000 children including**

1047 children of primary school classes (34 %) and 2023 children of gymnasium classes (66 %). These activities covered the following topics: *ABC of Online Safety (General Basic Rules of online safety for young children)*, *Cyberbullying*, *Online friends*, *Online environment and users* (primary school children), and *Online Image*, *Online Reputation*, *Online relationships*, *Sexting*, *Online communication and relationships* (gymnasium school children). It has been noticed that the number of visits to siguronline, as well as the number of requests for help from children have increased due to these awareness activities.

Since its launch in 2018, the "**[Intersection. Online Safe Zone](#)**" Programme has trained 182 teachers of primary and gymnasium classes from schools all over the country. During two years, it reached out to over 700 teachers that currently form a dedicated [Intersection - an online community of teachers for Online Safe Zone](#), offering regular information about resources and upcoming events, but also sharing positive practices of work. The INTERSECTION members are teachers of various backgrounds. The Programme has several components including: INTERSECTION teachers' summer school, annual national Teachers' Conference, Teachers' Contest and Experience Exchange Spring Workshop. Also available online are specially tailored materials to support the teachers, these are available in Ro and Ru on the dedicated column on [www.siguronline.md](http://www.siguronline.md). Teachers can also receive guidance by addressing questions on the portal chat.

Traditionally, the INTERSECTION Programme starts with the **annual national Teachers' Conference**. It is organized at the end of each year in the eve of Safer Internet Day. The main goal of the event is to equip teachers with knowledge and tools on dedicated topics, thus enabling them to reach out to children in their schools via awareness and educational activities during the campaign dedicated to Safer Internet Day 2020. In 2019, 124 primary and gymnasium class teachers got together [on the 30th of November and the 7th of December](#) for the National Teachers' Conference dedicated to the [Risks of accessing online sexual content for children of primary classes](#) and [Sextortion of children](#). The Conference was structured to include sessions that allow a multilateral approach to implementing the Conference goal: 1. Awareness raising about the selected issue; 2. Didactic work with children; 3. Interventions/case studies; 4. Technologic aspects. [The first event](#) took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November and was attended by 59 teachers of primary school classes. The conference included 4 sessions of discussions. [The second event](#) took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December and was attended by 65 teachers of gymnasium school classes. The conference included 4 sessions of discussions as well.

17 teachers from 11 regions of the country enrolled in the first edition of the **Teachers' Contest**. The teachers were given the task of delivering awareness and educational activities on issues they were trained during the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the [Teachers' Conference \(2018\)](#). As part of the conditions, each teacher was asked to carry out 2 different types of activities from a suggested list (interactive lessons for children; guiding the children in creating an original informative material; awareness activity with other teachers from their school and other). La Strada also provided each teacher with a set of informational and didactic materials as well as materials for the children, these are also available online on the Siguronline.md column for teachers. The evaluation committee of the contest included representative of La Strada and the Ministry of Education. The [3 selected winners](#) fall under the categories: *number of informed children*; *most popular material on social networks*; *most creative material made by children*. Three teachers have been [awarded with diplomas and laptops](#) to be used in their work with children. Altogether, the teachers who participated in the contest involved more than 2300 children in their activities.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 39 active teachers gathered in the **Spring Workshop on challenges and good SID practices** while engaging children in activities and discussions about online behaviors. The main task of the event was to identify the children's level of understanding about online safety following the activities organized by the teachers and assist teachers in strengthening their knowledge and skills where necessary. It has been noticed that teachers of primary classes consider that it is the parents' primary responsibility to speak to their children about online safe behaviors, yet they did confirm that Online Safety should also be taught in schools, because parents may lack the abilities to do that. Teachers of gymnasium classes are more reserved to freely talk to teenagers about online behaviors and safety topics when it comes to online sexual abuse. According to their feedback, the Workshop helped them overcome some of the challenges related to efficient communication with their students about online safety issues, they now feel more

confident using various educational and information tools. [The event](#) offered an opportunity for teachers to voice the fears and uncertainties they have and to jointly search for constructive solutions. As it was mentioned during the event, this activity gave them a sense of community, sharing common interest, problems, experiences and future plans.

On August [16<sup>th</sup>– 18<sup>th</sup>](#) and [23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>](#), 50 teachers of primary and gymnasium classes have participated in the **Professional Trainings on Child Online Safety (24 hours)**. The objective of the training was to properly equip the teachers with information, knowledge and skills necessary to carry out seminars about various aspects of Online Safety. Hence, the training kicked-off the first testing phase of the integrated model of child online safety in school. Teachers were familiarized with the specially developed set of didactic materials enabling them to deliver seminars during one school year as part of the formal curricula. The didactic set for primary class teachers included the following subjects: *Online environment and users; Online personal image; Online friends and friendship; Cyberbullying* and the set for gymnasium teachers included *Online image and reputation; Cyberbullying; Sexting; Grooming; Sextortion*. Teachers were also presented with various methodologies to deliver the information depending on the selected topic. Each teacher received a Workbook with systematized information on each session (theory, practical exercises, didactic materials and strategies, data and specialists' explanations and inputs) and which they could make notes on as necessary. Participants have shown increased interest sharing their own experiences. At the end of the training, participants developed calendars of Online Safety activities for one school year. The calendar along with the set of didactic materials will help monitor and assess the efficiency of the integrated model.

[On the 30th of November and 7th of December](#), 124 teachers of primary and gymnasium classes were involved in discussions about the [Risks of accessing online sexual content for primary classes children](#) and [Sextortion of children](#) at the **National teachers' Conference**. The main goal of the event was to increase awareness about child online safety among school professionals and to encourage them to raise the issue in their schools. The Conferences were specially tailored to empower the teachers to join the SID 2020 campaign and carry out information and education activities based on the materials presented and distributed during the event. In order to reach these objectives, each event was structured into several sessions ensuring a multi-lateral approach to the topic (I. Awareness raising about the topic; II. Didactic work with children; III. Intervention/case studies; IV. ICTs in support of teachers' work). [The first event](#) took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November and was attended by 59 teachers of primary school classes. The conference included 4 sessions of discussions. [The second event](#) took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December and was attended by 65 teachers of gymnasium school classes. The conference included 4 sessions of discussions as well.

La Strada trainer team has developed a set of 13 **didactic scenarios for working with children of primary and gymnasium classes**. These cover various aspects of online safety. All materials are age-appropriate, reflect an interactive educational approach and stimulate critical thinking. These materials have been designed by analyzing the feedback received from teachers and children during the trial exercises and simulations and they correspond to the criteria and principles set by the National Curriculum in the General Education system based on competences. The topics and the content of the materials have been coordinated with the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. The complete [didactic set](#) is available online on siguronline.md in the column designated to teachers, as well as on the Ministry of Education webpage. Based on the questions frequently received from teachers, 4 **new informative articles** have been prepared and uploaded to siguronline.md. And finally, a class poster "My Online Safety Rules" has been prepared and made available for each INTERSECTION Teacher. A [digital version of the poster](#) is also available on Siguronline.md as inspiration material for teachers.

Throughout 2019, the didactic resources for teachers available on the portal Siguronline.md have been downloaded 743 times, while 7995 views were registered overall with all the resources and information dedicated to the work of teachers with children of different ages. Teachers were primarily active during the SID campaign with seminars carried out on various topics reflected in the suggested didactic materials, very often trying to cover more than one. Teachers were continuously referring to the INTERSECTION team for guidance and input in planning a specific activity for children, as well as for suggestions about possible

interventions in some specific situations of high risk that their students had been involved (cyberbullying, sexting). During 2019, teachers, who have been trained under the INTERSECTION Program, delivered **lessons, seminars and organized extracurricular activities about Online Safety** for over 3000 children including *1047 children of primary school classes (34 %)* and *2023 children of gymnasium classes (66 %)*. These activities covered the following topics: *ABC of Online Safety (General Basic Rules of online safety for young children), Cyberbullying, Online friends, Online environment and users (primary school children), and Online Image, Online Reputation, Online relationships, Sexting, Online communication and relationships (gymnasium school children)*. It has been noticed that the number of visits to siguronline, as well as the number of requests for help from children have increased due to these awareness activities.

The specialists of the Siguronline team have been periodically solicited to deliver **peer-to-peer seminars for teachers** on different subjects (seminars with all the teachers of the school, seminars with more teachers from the same district, master-classes for teachers of primary school classes). The goal of these activities is to encourage teachers to get involved in educating their students about safety online by presenting new tools, sharing friendly/interactive methods, promoting a positive perspective of the Online Safety education. Some of the activities required a special approach, aimed to guide the teachers on ways to handle situations of risky behaviors online of a child in their class or situations of abuse that a child in their class has suffered/is suffering. 123 teachers from 12 schools throughout the country have benefited of such peer-to-peer field support. 50% of the teachers that participated in such activities manifested interest to participate later on in the activities dedicated to teachers within the programme.

During 2019, based on the **Safer Internet School** concept developed at earlier stages, La Strada has initiated a vast baseline analysis. Hence, focus-groups and consultations with 48 teachers, 112 children and 5 school managers from schools all over the country have been organized. Discussions were focused on 4 topics:

- Leadership and institutional policies,
- Education and capacity building of teachers,
- Intervention procedures and capacities in cases of online abuses.
- Infrastructure and technical measures.

The process was coordinated by La Strada along with the Ministry of Education. The final report reflecting on major findings and recommendations will be produced in 2020. The Report will serve as basis for developing the Safer Internet School Model.

350 parents from over 20 settlements of the country were informed about online safety via **seminars for parents unfolded in schools** in partnership with INTERSECTION teachers; empowered with digital tools and skills to guide their children on how to fully and safely benefit from being online. It was noticed that parents from Chisinau and more developed districts are more attentive and aware of the online activities of their children, being active users themselves. In rural regions, though, parents are less concerned about the online activity of their children because they themselves are passive users, have limited knowledge in the use of technologies and the use of Internet is not part of their daily routine. Parents from urban areas were more involved in giving feedback, asking questions and requesting input on specific situations and cases.

**3 Weekend Coffee-Talks with parents** with the participation of 29 parents were organized. The events were announced on Facebook. The main purpose of the activity was to encourage discussions related to safety online, inspire parent-to-parent discussions in a non-formal environment, creating a group of support, trust, inspiration and motivation. The discussed topics were (a) Social networks, teenagers, challenges, (b) Safety online in the 5th grade; (c) Children and gadgets. When is it too much? La Strada partnered with Simpals for promotion of Coffee Talks events on online platforms dedicated to parents: <https://mama.md/news/deti/copilul-meu-e-sigur-online-din-clasa-a-5-a-r20317/?fbclid=IwAR3yWLuZz6SOWhEkv77I049zGwrpSK4mIUUkAcu7UKnBRnrCACDq372pmZQ>  
<https://mama.md/news/deti/copilul-%C8%99i-gadgeturile-c%C3%A2nd-este-prea-mult-r20557/>

During 2019, **5 new informative articles dedicated to parents** were developed and published on Siguronline.md column dedicated to parents. All articles covered frequently asked questions by parents.

The [Parent's online guide on social media](#) was also prepared and published explaining particularities of functionality of social networks to help parents understand risks and ways of dealing with them. Tips about how to develop children's skills and critical abilities to be protected from online risks, potential aggression or abuse were provided.

Also, during reported period, several printed materials were developed:

- Informational flyers, adapted to three age categories: 6-10 years, 11-13 years and 14+ years.  
[Safety Online at 6-10 years](#)  
[Safety Online at 11-13 years](#)  
[Safety Online at 14+ years](#)
- Siguronline Magnetic Notepads, aiming to promote Siguronline.md brand in a friendly format for parents and children.

Finally, during the reporting period, the team has developed and tested two scenarios of video materials targeting parents. Production is scheduled for 2020.

### **Siguronline.md for parents**

Of the total number of 48,278 portal users registered in 2019, about 5,5% (2,681) accessed it via social networks. Of these 2,681 users, over 93.18% (2,502) accessed the parent page via facebook and 1.53% via YouTube. Of the total number of online accesses of Siguronline.md portal (134,706 page views), about 18% of users accessed the parent section (23,699 page views) of which about 20% are single users who have learned about the portal during the offline activities with parents or from the Facebook page. Thus, an increase from 13.5% hits (2018) to 20% (2019) is registered. The time users visiting parent pages spend has increased to up to 4 minutes (the max duration of an article to read or video material to watch).

The portal is accessed mostly by women (68%) aged 25-34 years (35%) and 35-44 years (27%). 45% of users are from Moldova and approximately the same number of users (44%) is from Romania. 77% of hits are registered from the search engines and 13% of users have accessed the portal directly as a result of the information learned during offline activities. 23.5% users accessed the Russian version of the portal.

As for online counseling for parents – in general, the dynamics of requests from adults is increasing – from 72 in 2017, to 97 in 2018, and to 129 requests for counseling in 2019.

A general trend similar to the requests from children was noticed, i.e. the number of requests for counseling of general nature is decreasing (75% drop compared to 2017-2018) and similarly with requests on content related risks. On the other hand, there is a significant increase in requests for assistance on issues related to child safe behavior online deriving from the risk of sexting (75% as compared to 2018 and 100% compared to 2017). Parents also request support in cases of online sexual abuse of children (86 % increase compared to 2017 and 10% increase compared to 2018).

Generally, it is observed that the level of interest and engagement of parents into online safety education and support for their children is quite low.

Upon invitation of [Future Lab](#), a special Programme created to educating digital skills in teachers, La Strada carried out one seminar for 20 gymnasium teachers who are national trainers of Future Lab about Online Safety and the Siguronline.md portal. Over 80% of these teachers have enrolled and participated in the National Teachers' Conference that provided deeper knowledge about child online safety and tools for teachers.

Upon invitation of [ARTICO](#), Republican Centre for Children and Youth, La Strada delivered thematic presentations for the *iTeacher* platform participants about the role of the teachers in educating online safe behaviors with children. Over 200 teachers have registered and participated in the online event. Additionally, [informative and interactive activities](#) for children aged 4 to 11 years and their parents were organized in on the occasion of International Children's Day. Activities aimed at increasing awareness about safety

online, promoting siguronline.md. Positive and interactive methods were used including knowledge games and contests. Children received siguronline branded bracelets and stickers. The siguronline booth was one of the favorites among other info booths. This format of activities is suitable for other offline activities that could be organized on the occasion of International Child Day or in summer camps.

La Strada experts participated in 4 IFG events organized by Moldcell with the participation of 55 parents. Although, initially conceptualized as an informative event for parents, they manifested low interest and events gradually transformed from informative ones about safety online into entertaining events for children about robotics and positive use of technologies. Generally it is observed that the engagement of businesses and other associated stakeholders is still low.

La Strada's focus for **2019 SID campaign** was about the risk of sextortion. This topic has been picked up because it is the most frequent risk adolescents are exposed to and yet the least known to them. The campaign included several communication tools including:

- [a video about a typical case of sextortion](#), inspired from [Child Safeguarding Team and which addresses to adolescents](#). Youngsters were encouraged to seek support in similar cases on the [www.siguronline.md platform](#). The video banner registered 70K views and the video itself - 4,2 K views on La Strada Moldova channels only.
- a [Guide for Parents to Keep Children Safe on Social Media](#) inspired from frequent questions raised by parents also in the idea to help parents help their children who are exposed or are suffering from this form of violence.

[The official press release](#) of the campaign was picked up by and reflected in 17 media headlines on national radio, TV and online media channels (ex.: [Agora.md](#), [ea.md](#), [diez.md](#), [stiri.md](#), [TVR Moldova](#), [mamaplus.md](#), [noi.md](#), [1news.md](#)) with reference to [siguronline.md](#) and the Child Safeguarding Team. At the same time, agora.md and ea.md reported a total of 996 clicks on the video banner (connected to the reporting mechanism of siguronline.md) while diez.md reported-340 clicks.

It was noticed that the media covered the issue rather qualitatively avoiding superficial or hysteric language with no out-of-context messages. La Strada team provided 4 interviews to journalists willing to cover specific aspects of sextortion based on cases dealt by the La Strada Child Safeguarding Team. The La Strada Moldova Facebook account activity during the campaign period (February, 5-12) resulted in over 11, 8K organic impressions.

### **// To ensure accessibility and availability of specialized services to children affected by COSESA //**

The [Safe Reporting Mechanism](#) (SRM) was created and made available for children, their careers and child protection professionals as a way to get individual help and assistance on issues related to online safety including in situations of danger or risk in an anonymous and friendly environment. All requests are counseled by professionals trained in child welfare who are members of [the Child Safeguarding Team](#).

During 2019, the SRM was integrated into the INTERSECTION Programme activities and tools. Hence, all didactic scenarios for gymnasium classes include an activity (exercise, worksheet, topic of discussion) referring to the Siguronline.md and the SRM. Similarly, agendas of all activities included one session dedicated to the SRM. The ultimate idea is to enable teachers to talk about it and encourage children to seek advice and help using the SRM whenever needed on issues related to online safety.

Resource materials were prepared and shared via [Intersection - online community of teachers for Online Safe Zone and siguronline.md](#) column for teachers providing practical tips and guidance for teachers on various aspects ranging from how to talk to children about online abuse to how to deal with a case of online abuse in their school. Examples of such posts can be found here: „Should we conduct lessons about sexting in a class where there is child whose intimate picture has been distributed via social networks?”.

Interactions with teachers lead to the following important conclusions: COSESA as a phenomena is new to teachers and many do not recognize their role in its prevention; teachers lack clarity in regards to their



mandate in a presumed case of COSESA due to the fact that current SOPs cover other forms of violence against children while missing the particularities of COSESA cases and needs of children who have suffered; Limits of the interventions are also unclear (when they should involve the school administration, police, child protection bodies, etc.), leading to a shift in responsibilities from one actor to another or even a total lack of involvement.

In the fall of 2019, the first two workshops were organized for the staff of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services (SAP) from two rayons gathering 35 school psychologists and support teachers. The purpose of these events was to raise awareness about COSESA and encourage vigilance and child-centered interventions in presumed cases. The agenda covered issues such as: signs of online child sexual abuse and how it affects the child, indicators of online sexual abuse that help observe and identify abuses, responses to online sexual abuse cases, safe interventions and the role of the SRM as well as services of the Child Safeguarding Team. Discussions confirmed plenty of stereotypes related to cases of COSESA with these professionals: It is mistakenly considered that (a) children who spend more time online, are more exposed to experiences of online abuses; (b) children are exposed to online abuse because of the lack of adult control and lack of parents' monitoring. Professionals concluded that school psychologists are currently not capable of providing the necessary assistance to children who experienced COSESA. Continuous training is required along with clear instructions and SOPs on interventions in COSESA cases due to confusions regarding their mandate, and cooperation with other actors within and outside the school when it comes to a COSESA case. In addition, SAP specialists consider that the multidisciplinary approach (engaging school, police, social protection) in response to a signaled/presumed case may not be in the best interest of the child, especially when speaking about the first response and intervention. The child may be intimidated by participation of other actors. At the same time, it is not clear if their involvement is mandatory or not.

The [Child Safeguarding Team](#) is composed of a lawyer and psychologists whose mission is to make the path of the child throughout criminal court proceedings less traumatic, while securing justice. During 2019, the team provided assistance in 112 cases, of which 86 are new and 26 are ongoing cases, registered in previous years. In the other 29 cases, assistance terminated and cases were closed due to refusal of the beneficiary or refusal to further cooperate with police (5 cases), closure of legal proceedings (10 cases), issuance of irrevocable court decision (8 cases – in the interest of the child); closure of legal proceedings due to lack of offense (6 cases).

The current workload of the Child Safeguarding Team represents 83 cases. Most of the requests for assistance come from specialized police departments – human trafficking and cybercrime – 37 cases followed by prosecutors and local police – 31 cases; 7 cases were referred from siguronline.md and 11 cases of specialized Helplines.

From the total number of newly assisted cases:

- 33 children – victims of sexual abuse including rape (art. 171 CC), sexual intercourse with the person who did not reach age of 16 (art. 174 CC), perverse actions (art. 175 CC);
- 29 children – victims of online child sexual exploitation including child pornography (art. 208/1 CC), child trafficking facilitated by ICTs (art. 206 CC).

Most of the new beneficiaries are girls (77 out of 86). The youngest beneficiary is as 7 years old and most beneficiaries are in the age category 14+ (54 children). The majority of children assisted originated from the central zone of the country (58 cases).

The psychologist of the Child Safeguarding Team conducted or assisted in 75 hearings in special conditions or general conditions, prepared 14 psychological reports and provided psychological assistance during criminal and court proceedings – 103 interventions.

The lawyer of the Child Safeguarding Team provided specialized legal assistance in 44 cases (from the total of 86 cases). The workload of the lawyer in 2019 consisted primarily in the assistance of the child during the prosecution stage (184 interventions) following by court proceedings (218 interventions). Legal consultations were also provided in another 37 cases.

Due to the interventions of the Child Safeguarding Team, repeated interviews were avoided in some cases, while in other cases interviews were conducted in specially equipped premises, thus avoiding shaming and blaming questions or attitudes, while ensuring that the child is better prepared and understands the particularities of each legal action she/he is taking part in, all leading to anxiety reduction. Parents of the child were empowered to have an encouraging attitude and avoid blaming the child for what happened. Psychologists were always by the side of the child accompanying them to specialized clinics for free treatment of STDs or other services and shelters. Need for psychological evaluation reports, referral of the child to specialized shelter, application of arrest for perpetrators, compensation of moral damage and other actions were possible due to actions undertaken by the lawyer.

Usually children feel grateful for all support provided and they consider the justice was restorative for most of them when the perpetrator is finally convicted. However, lengthy procedures at both investigation stage or during court examination, make them lose interest and motivation for any further participation. An exception are the cases of sexual intercourse with a minor under 16 years old (174 CC), that usually happens in a relationship where the child considers to be a love one. So, in all these cases, children consider these criminal proceedings against their rights, as they do not consider themselves as victims and don't have any complaints against the abuser.

During 2019, 52 children were referred to various services, primarily shelter, reproductive health/services and therapy.

**//To contribute to the development of capacities of professionals to effectively respond to the cases of COSESA//**

La Strada has agreed to partner with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC <https://www.icmec.org/>) to organize a Training of Trainers for a group of law enforcement and judiciary. During the year, the team has prepared all necessary materials and inputs and scheduled the ToT for June 2020. The general aim is to support the NIJ to develop and integrate the special course on COSESA into continuous training curricula.

**//To support the Government of RM in integrating COSESA issues into national child rights protection policies//**

La Strada initiated a mapping and **analysis of national policies documents covering child safety online**. The exercise aims at developing recommendations for improving and strengthening state response to COSESA in line with Convention, Committee of Ministers CM/Rec (2018)7 on Guidelines, in order to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of the child in the digital environment and other international standards. The outcomes of the analysis are expected to aid the decision making process in relationship to the next Child Protection Strategy of the RM that will be launched in fall 2020. The study is expected to be released for public consultation in spring 2020.

La Strada has advocated that the Action Plan of the Government for 2019-2020 includes approbation of the **National Mechanism for the Monitoring of the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention** and improvement of the legal framework that incriminates the crimes related to human trafficking,

according to the international standards. Because of changes of the Government, the final draft of the Action Plan did not include these actions<sup>2</sup>.

On the occasion of the **European Day to Fight Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**, La Strada implemented a short advocacy campaign targeting policymakers by announcing a press conference via [press release](#). The press conference was held jointly with the chief of anti-trafficking and child sexual abuse online Unit from the GPO. Data about COSESA were shared with the public by releasing an [Infographic](#). The press conference focused on several key messages: recognizing COSESA as a grave form of abuse against children (equal to physical abuse and violence/contact sexual abuse) and address it correspondingly via field policies; address the threat by streamlining investigations into COSESA correspondingly strengthen professional capacity building of law enforcement and judiciary at all levels; increase resilience of children by strengthening prevention, hence, develop continuous education programs for children about safe and responsible use of internet. Media representatives also distributed the Child Safeguarding Team [Factsheet](#), and copies of the guide for professionals ([What is online sexual exploitation of children](#)) meant to increase awareness of the media to COSESA particularities. [The notice](#) about the guide's content was one of the most popular Facebook posts and generated the highest number of Facebook impressions during the campaign period. The campaign generated 20 media headlines on 8 media channels. The [press-conference's live-stream](#) registered over 24K views. As a result, Radio Europa Liberă produced a highly accurate and qualitative [reportage](#) with 1,3K organic impressions, 317 interactions on La Strada Facebook account only. The Child Program Director held a [live interview](#) for a morning TV show at Prime TV (2,5 K views) and held a [live TV show](#) at the national tv channel „Moldova 1”. La Strada Moldova Facebook account activity during the campaign period (November, 14-18) resulted in over 703, 64K organic impressions and brought 28 new followers.

To increase attention of national authorities to the issue of protection of the rights of children who are victims of crimes, La Strada team has provided separate opinions about **the protection of children victims and witnesses during GRETA evaluation round**. A number of serious bottlenecks in the national response leading to grave violation of international standards that guarantees special protection measures for children victims of THB were highlighted including: confrontation practices; direct contact between the child and the abuser during criminal investigation proceedings; selective interpretation of legal provisions regulating hearing under special conditions generating harmful practices with regard to safety of children aged 14+, including non-application of these provisions, or conducting hearings of the child with the presence of the offender; repeated hearings as an abusive practice where the child is forced to answer the same questions several times during the investigation stage and in the court.

Similarly, La Strada shared its observations and recommendations on issues related to **child-friendly justice for children victims and witnesses of crimes within the Human Rights Dialogue 2019**, organized by EU representatives in Moldova. Special attention was drawn to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. Concerns included lack of specially trained professionals impending adequate assistance focusing on children needs, justice, time and diligence; lack of controlled contact of the victim with defendant enabling the offender to directly contact the child during criminal proceedings; long waiting time after arriving in court prior to the start of the hearing; deficient preparation of the court hearing, often ending with postponing the hearing even after hours of waiting in the court building; inappropriate facilities and infrastructure in courts impeding hearing procedures with due respect to the special rights of children victims/witness of crime leading to child intimidation and increased anxiety.

As representative of the ECPAT Moldova, La Strada participated at several online meetings with local coordinators aiming at planning activities, sharing info about local initiatives and challenges. To increase visibility of COSESA on the regional level, La Strada contributed to an **ECPAT** initiative by developing a „CASE STUDY” covering brief about national ECPAT network, data about CSEA in Moldova, example of

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<sup>2</sup> [https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/pag\\_2019-2020\\_hg.pdf](https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/pag_2019-2020_hg.pdf)

good practices and lessons learnt. A brochure reflecting Moldova practices is expected for publication in 2020.

In a written statement, La Strada Moldova demanded a well-known national talk-show to stop the practice of inviting children who have suffered from sexual abuse to the show. The position paper was supported by the Board of the Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Protection (National Alliance). The position paper was delivered to the media institution, as mandatory legal step prior to reporting about the violations to the relevant authorities if such a decision is envisioned.

La Strada also notified the General Police Inspectorate (in written form) about harmful practices of sharing videos or photos of the crime scene which lead to easy identification of the children victims and/or their families. It was strongly recommended to revise this practice when communicating to the public about such crimes and actions undertaken.

As part of the efforts undertaken by the National Alliance in order to promote **INSPIRE Strategies** to End Violence against Children, La Strada contributed to the development of the Country Factsheet. The National Advocacy Plan developed by the Alliance also reflected La Strada inputs among which are the need for child protection policies in schools and the need for specific guidelines on building schools capacity to promote safe and responsible use of internet by children and to strengthen their resilience to the risks of online violence.

La Strada also gave notice to the Superior Council of Magistrates, Superior Court of Justice and Superior Council of Prosecutors about **deficient and harmful practices involving children in the Chisinau Court**, Ciocana district. Selective or abusive interpretation and application by the judges of the provisions of art. 110/1 and 109 of the CPP were highlighted as well as insufficient infrastructure and violation of the Guidelines for prosecutors regarding the conduct of the hearing of the child victim/witness of the crime leading to secondary victimization of children who suffered from abuse and exploitation.

#### **//To contribute to the decision making process at all levels by providing qualitative research data and information//**

Media, researches, public officials or other interested persons can access data about the COSESA phenomena based on cases reported via [siguronline.md](http://siguronline.md) and assisted by the [Child Safeguarding team](#) in both Romanian and English languages. Information about teachers' engagements in promoting a safe use of internet are also included in the [INTERSECTION Factsheet](#). A list of key indicators for case-based analysis of ICT facilitated abuse is in the process of development and will be piloted in 2020.

#### **//Issues of special interest//**

In summer 2019, La Strada created a **Children's Advisory Board called „La Strada Squad”**, represented by children aged 9-14. The purpose of the Board is to consult La Strada on content and format of activities aimed at children and will be piloted for one year. The Squad has monthly meetings focusing primarily on Siguronline content and INTERSECTION related activities, such as Siguronline mascot, scenarios of animated awareness videos, animation characters' messages to promote siguronline on social media, accessibility and functionality of SRM, feedback on the draft videos of peer-to-peer discussions about online safety issues. By the date of reporting, this practice has proven to be a very useful one for content development, as it ensures a stable source of inspiration in the activities with children.

La Strada also took consideration of children's opinions when testing every new lesson plan, didactic scenario and resource material designed for teachers. Over 300 children aged 11-16 participated in these pilots. Traditionally, the conclusions reached by La Strada Squad were subsequently tested in field activities conducted in schools and summer camps.