

Danish campaign targets diversity in domestic violence



The poster features a red background with a subtle floral pattern. At the top, the text reads "STOP VOLDEN MOD KVINDER" in white, with "♥ bryd tavsheden" below it. On the right, a woman with long dark hair is shown sitting on the floor, looking down with a sad expression. In the center, a white box contains the text: "Er der vold i din familie, og har du brug for hjælp eller rådgivning?" followed by a mobile phone icon, "Ring på Hotline: 70 20 30 82 (svarer hele døgnet)". On the left, two red arrow-shaped boxes point towards the center, containing the text: "Hvis du er udsat for vold" and "Hvis du kender en voldsramt kvinde". At the bottom, there are three lines of text in different languages: "Stop violence against women break the silence", "Остановить насилие против женщин хватит молчать", and Thai text: "ยุติการใช้ความรุนแรงกับผู้หญิง อาสาเก็บเงื้อมมือไว้ไม่ไว้"

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Bryd tavsheden (Break the silence)

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In brief

Since 2002, Denmark has adopted four National Action Plans to stop violence against women, and these have adapted to evolving patterns of violence. The Bryd tavsheden (Break the silence) campaign in 2010 specifically targeted ethnic minority women to help them to escape from violence by their partners. It was carried out by the ministry for gender equality in co-operation with LOKK, the national association of women's shelters.

Its strategy was to formulate a strong simple message, and to direct this at ethnic minority women in a way they would understand. The campaign therefore published its information leaflets in nine languages, and distributed there in places where ethnic minority women would come across them. This multilingual approach also made it easy for ethnic minority media, which often do not have the budgets to pay for translations, to come on board the campaign. It obtained endorsements from popular ethnic minority role models, and produced short films in 10 languages. The campaign's website is still in use to this day.

It also created a simple but imaginative tool in the form of a hairbrush bearing the number of the 24-hour telephone hotline for battered women. The brushes stimulated debates in hairdressers' and beauty salons and many women took the brushes home, thus spreading the message further.

An external evaluation was built into the project design. It found that the campaign had been a great success, in terms of reaching its targets, but for the future it recommended also including men and the native Danish media within its scope. It also discovered a significant stumbling block in the lack of response from trade unions representing ethnic minority women.

Break the silence has been followed up with the Red Card and White Ribbon campaigns.

Recognition of diversity in domestic violence

Even if the Danes are reportedly the happiest people on earth, it is a truth with some very unfortunate exceptions. In August 2014, 14 women lost their lives due to partner violence – the figure exceeding the total of 13 for the whole year of 2013. The figures are sad evidence that most partner violence is about men's violence against women. The latest Danish research shows that some 29,000 women and 10,000 men are exposed to violence from a former or current partner. Around 28,000 children grow up in homes with violence, and these children face higher risks of bringing a pattern as a perpetrator and/or a victim with them into their relationships in adult life.

Since 2002, Denmark has adopted four National Action Plans to stop violence against women according to the definition of the UN Beijing protocol of 1995. In the first of these, adopted in 2002, one of the main aims was explicitly to break the taboo surrounding domestic violence against women. This has proven right, and domestic violence is now less considered as a private affair and it seems more legitimate for politicians as well as for the public at large to address violence against women. The terminology has changed accordingly, and rather than talking about domestic trouble (husspetakler), the term is now 'partner violence' or the more precise term, 'men's violence against women'. The first Danish NAPs encompassed women in general but also specific groups such as women of ethnic minority background, who were considered to be particularly vulnerable. This attention to ethnic minority women is also present in the national Danish strategy to prevent violence in intimate relationships (2011) which explicitly recognises that ethnic minority women have specific and bigger difficulties in getting out of violent relationships than native Danish women. As a matter of fact, they often go back to their violent partners and very seldom establish their own homes after leaving the crisis centre. Various initiatives (especially those of the Ministry of Refugee, Integration and Immigration Affairs) have been taken to tackle this issue and to make these women aware of the opportunities available.

A campaign for ethnic minority women

Seven years previously, on 10 November 2003, a month-long Stop violence against women – Break the Silence (Bryd tavsheden) awareness-raising campaign was launched. The target audience was the public in general and victims of domestic violence. This first campaign addressed domestic violence and used outdoor posters, buses, trains, television and the internet as media channels.

Given the increasing attention being paid to ethnic minority women, in 2010 it was decided to conduct a communication campaign addressed specifically to them. Its aim was to break the taboo surrounding violence against women in local ethnic communities and to inform ethnic minority women about their rights and the sources of support they could turn to. The campaign was organised and carried out with the direct involvement of LOKK (Landsorganisation af Kvindekrisecentre), the national organisation of shelters for battered women. A number of professionals were also involved, especially those already working in the networks of battered ethnic minority women.

The campaign's relevance stems from the fact that it allowed for diversity amongst victims of domestic violence, provided a wide range of communication tools, advertised a 24-hour hotline on violence against women and distributed handy cards which gave victims of domestic violence all the information they need to find help in their local communities.

The campaign took place in February-May 2010 and was financed by the state with a budget of €212,800, including evaluation. At the time it fell under the responsibility of the Ministry for Gender Equality and Ecclesiastical Affairs and the Ministry of Integration, but is now looked after by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. The campaign was successful in involving ethnic minority community networks, which had a large impact on the wider environment within which abused ethnic minority women live. Its effectiveness is proved by the results obtained.

Role models, multilingual leaflets and films

An information folder was produced and distributed in credit card format. It is headed “Stop the violence against women – Break the silence” in Danish and eight other languages (English, Arabic, Bosnian, Somali, Turkish, Russian, Thai and Farsi). The information folders were distributed throughout the country in libraries, general health practitioners, police stations, hospitals – and also hairdressers (hairbrushes with the 24-hour hotline number on them were distributed to ethnic hairdressers and beauty salons) and other meeting points in local communities. The folder is also accessible on the web at www.voldmodkvinder.dk. It contains information about shelters along with practical advice to women exposed to violence. The publication also refers women to the 24-hour hotline (70 20 30 82) and mentions the availability of cultural mediators and interpreters.

Nine well-known women with different ethnic minority backgrounds were used as role models (“ambassadors”) to express their dissociation from domestic violence. Dialogue meetings with relevant networks in contact with ethnic minority women were held. Besides the campaign, information films addressed to ethnic minority women about their rights and opportunities of assistance in Danish society have been produced. The films show battered women’s encounters with the police, the shelter, the municipality, the county and the lawyer. The films were prepared in ten languages (Danish, Greenlandic, English, Arabic, Urdu, Somali, Turkish, Russian, Thai and Farsi) and distributed to shelters, language schools, day folk high schools for women, counselling facilities for women and ethnic minorities, local communities, counsellors, municipalities and the libraries of relevant educational programmes – for example the Police College and the College of Social Work. The five films are still available on various websites, including www.lige.dk and www.voldmodkvinder.dk.

Reaching illiterate victims

An external ex post evaluation carried out by international consultancy group COWI showed that the campaign was successful in gaining a high number of mentions in ethnic media, in boosting the number of calls to a nationwide hotline by ethnic minority women and in scoring high satisfaction ratings among the actors involved. It has also made efficient use of resources, as the tools it created are still available after its conclusion and being used. It is notable for its multilingual approach.

The evaluation identified the campaign's strengths and weaknesses and made suggestions on how to improve communication with the target victim groups (for example, communicating information through films means that it is also possible to reach women who cannot read). The campaign was very positively evaluated in relation to the objective of informing ethnic minority women on their rights and options.

Several elements of the campaign's design were particularly effective. The use of the minority communities' own languages was a major factor in reaching the target women, and it also enabled cash-strapped ethnic minority media, which could not afford to pay for translation, to promulgate the message. The promotion of female role models as "ambassadors" was particularly successful in involving a number of networks. Dialogue meetings with local networks helped to identify key actors who spread the campaign's message more widely. And the hairbrushes bearing the 24-hour hotline number were a particular talking point: they stimulated debates at hairdressers and beauty salons. Many customers took the hairbrushes and accompanying information home with them, thus spreading the message further.

However the evaluation also made some suggestions for improvement:

- the campaign's profile in the Danish media could have been higher
- the website at www.voldmodkvinder.dk needed improvement
- any future campaign should make more use of district nurses and networks of battered ethnic minority women to carry the message
- future campaigns should also target men. All men should be considered so to avoid stigmatising ethnic minority men.

It also noted that one of the outreach methods used, dialogue meetings with trade unions which had a lot of ethnic minority women members, had not brought the expected results. This may have been because most trade union representative are men, who find it difficult to tackle the issue, that ethnic minority women are underrepresented and their problems are not visible in the workplace, and that domestic violence is still considered to be a private problem.

Give violence against women the red card

These lessons were taken on board in a wave of campaigns aiming to include men in the fight for gender equality and make them aware of their role in the fight against violence against women. The campaigns addressed men as abusers, but also as fathers, husbands and sons of the victims of violence. Inspired by a Spanish campaign, Denmark has run the Give violence against women the Red Card campaign twice.



In 2011 the ministry teamed up with the Danish Football Association and two young football players, acting as role models and spokespersons for the message: Don't hit! We demand fair play on the football pitch – and in the family. The intent was to engage a new audience – boys and men – in fighting violence against women. Interest among the Danish champion's league clubs was very positive and the campaign succeeded in getting a fair amount of attention from the press. Owing to the immense interest that Danish handball attracted at the time, the ministry chose to repeat the campaign, now including also a top player from the national handball team. He and a football "icon" were the faces that were linked to the campaign.

The White Ribbon Campaign

In March 2013 Denmark launched the White Ribbon Campaign, which is a worldwide initiative to end men's violence against women. White Ribbon is an independent network for men, engaging other men to pledge to the following three things:

- not to commit violence against women
- not to defend other men's violence against women
- not to be silent about men's violence against women

**Vær en mand.
Sig fra over for vold mod kvinder.**

Peter Mygind, skuespiller

foto: Miklos Szabo



White Ribbon Danmark

2 Synes godt om-bekendegivelser

Synes godt om

Besked

Fællesskab

White Ribbon Danmark er et dansk netværk mod vold mod kvinder. Netværket er åbent for alle, og du kan støtte op om netværkets arbejde her på vores Facebook-side.

Om



Billeder



Beer sløjfen



Sådan siger du fra



Meld dig ind

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Until the end of 2013, the Ministry of Gender Equality had the main responsibility for running the campaign, after which it was taken over by volunteers. The start was slow and difficult. But the dedicated voluntary spokesperson has succeeded in creating partnerships with various private companies and public agencies. The number of 'likes' on the campaign's webpage has gone up considerably, and the spokesman often makes speeches in various settings about the campaign and the facts about violence against women.

Patterns of violence change over time

Denmark's four National Action Plans show a progressive broadening of the scope of work against gender-based violence. Since Beijing 1995, the overall approach has been that violence against women is a gender equality problem, that domestic violence is totally unacceptable, and that all relevant means must be used to prevent it, to stop it and to support the victims. Denmark has so far implemented three national action plans and the fourth plan was launched in July 2014.

With the first action plan (2002) to stop violence against women, the issue became a part of the political agenda and the results were significant:

- abused women got easier access to help
- professionals increased their knowledge and awareness

- there was a special focus on men's role in breaking the cycle of violence

Not least, national data on the prevalence of domestic violence were published, showing that approximately 42,000 women each year were exposed to violence from a present or former partner. An external evaluation concluded that the action plan had confronted the most critical areas regarding violence against women, but also that future actions should focus more on preventive initiatives.

The second action plan (2005) widened the scope of the issue, which is indicated by the title: National action plan to stop men's domestic violence against women and children. It still focused on support to victims, it continued to offer treatment to perpetrators, it advocated a strong multi-disciplinary effort, and it emphasised the need for more knowledge among all stakeholders. The external evaluation found that the plan had raised victims' awareness of their rights and of the possibilities for support. It noted that knowledge and information about violence against women and domestic violence had increased and that professionals and authorities had benefitted from it to some extent. But the evaluation also said that professionals and front-line staff at the local level did not know enough about domestic violence and the way it influences the whole family, especially the children.

The third action plan (2010-2013) expanded the scope once more. The plan is called the National strategy to prevent violence in families and intimate relations, which acknowledges that partner violence also takes place when family relations have changed. The target groups for the strategy were women, children, male perpetrators and front-line staff working in a variety of job functions in the municipalities. The external evaluation concluded that the plan had contributed to a holistic and coordinated approach to the many different activities which characterise the area. The existing support and treatment-services were strengthened, and new methods to reach and support battered women were developed.

The fourth action plan – young people, bidirectional violence and stalking

Preparing for the fourth action plan it became very clear that people other than women may be exposed to domestic violence. Surveys show that the number of men who are exposed to domestic violence has increased, and that far too many young people are exposed to violence from a girlfriend or boyfriend. Organisations who work with perpetrators reported that one out of five abusers that they see for treatment is a woman. Furthermore, these organisations also reported that the so-called bidirectional violence has a huge extent – a general finding which is backed by American research. Finally, it became clear that stalking is a major problem and that victims of stalking lack sufficient support from the general public system. The fourth national action plan therefore embraces the fact that the patterns and target groups of violence change over time.

Violence against women is still at the core of the government's measures in this area, because women remain those most affected. However with its fourth's action plan, the government wishes to continue and improve measures in favour of a broad target group of people exposed to violence in intimate relations. So far the established system has not focused particularly on bi-directional violence between adults in a family, or on the fact that a man can be exposed to physical and psychological violence from a woman. Neither has focus been on support to victims of stalking or on preventing and treating the consequences of non-honour-related violence in ethnic minority families. Finally, it has proved difficult to address violence in relationships between young people, and the various services and facilities for young people who have been exposed to dating violence typically depend on whether the young person is above or below the age of 18.

To sum up, national action plans (NAPs for short) have been a very effective means to break the silence about domestic violence and violence in intimate relations: nowadays a majority of Danes do not consider violence against women to be a private problem, and also know where abused women can seek help and guidance. The NAPs maintain a constant focus on domestic violence within the administration, and create an institutional framework within which many different stakeholders can join forces to solve the problem. They supplement the established social, health and legal system and give room for pilots in order to find effective ways to combat domestic violence. Finally the action plans have financed research and mapping that have broadened the knowledge base for all who work in this field.

Contacts/Further Information

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Further information

Good practice website



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