



IMPACT STORY



POLICE UNITS FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN MOROCCO PRIORITIZE SURVIVORS' NEEDS

Photo: UN Women/Mohammed Bakir

“I often thought I should just give up this battle and live with my husband in the same house to preserve our family,” said Amina El Mostafa, a Moroccan domestic violence survivor who reported her case to the police. “It would be better than being shamed as a divorced woman. But he was very violent. He was threatening me that the house belonged to him and that he would sell it and put me on the street.”

After enduring years of economic and physical violence by her husband, El Mostafa contacted one of the Police Units for Women Victims of Violence in Morocco where her case was investigated and referred to the Prosecutor. The unit arranged her stay at a shelter where she currently resides as she awaits the court hearing. “On the way to the police station, I was terrified. What if they mock me? What if I get shouted at? After what I went through, the last thing I wanted was to feel embarrassed, ridiculed or humiliated. Luckily, the experience turned out to be much better than expected. A friendly and comforting policewoman welcomed me,” shared El Mostafa.

According to a national survey on violence against women in Morocco, only 8 out of 100 women subject to domestic violence file a complaint with the police or other authorities. In response to this alarming statistic, in 2018 the General Directorate of National Security in Morocco,

Photo above: From left, Amina El Mostafa (not her real name), survivor of violence; Fadoua el Filali, Court Officer in Salé; Saliha Najeh, Police Chief in Casablanca.

PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

The UN Women programme “**Improved Prevention and Responses for Women Victims of Violence in Morocco**” (2018-2022) is funded by the **Government of Canada** and is implemented through diverse partnerships, including Morocco's **National Security General Directorate**, the **Public Prosecutor's Office**, the **National Mutual Aid**, the **Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family**, the **Ministry of Justice**, the **Parliamentary Group for Gender Equality**, and the **High Commission for Planning**, as well as civil society organisations.

To date the programme has:

- Trained a national pool of **30** trainers within the Units for Women Victims of Violence on international standards and the national legal and institutional framework.
- Trained **143** officers from National Mutual Aid on how to support survivors of violence.
- Trained **160** magistrates on the implementation of Law 103.13 on Combating Violence against Women.
- Supported **20** local NGOs with awareness-raising, reaching more than **14,000** women and girls and **12,000** boys.

supported by UN Women, restructured the existing Police Units for Women Victims of Violence at all 132 principal police stations across the country. This was implemented under the project “Improved Prevention and Responses for Women Victims of Violence in Morocco,” with funding from the Government of Canada.

As part of the project, from December 2019 to April 2021, UN Women supported the implementation of a training of trainers programme and equipped a national pool of 30 trainers within the Units for Women Victims of Violence with the necessary knowledge and competencies to duplicate the training through modules on international norms, standards and ethics, the national legal and institutional framework, and tools to train adults.

“The biggest challenge is to help the survivor break free from the fear that is overwhelming her and to tell me her story,” said Saliha Najeh, Chief of the Casablanca Prefectural Police Unit for Women Victims of Violence. “It takes a lot of courage for her to come to us, and it takes even more courage for her to tell me what she has been through. As Police Chief, I need to learn how to manage the silence. I need to give her the necessary time to feel secure and comfortable to tell me her story.”

El Mostafa recounted her impressions while she was at the police station and her shock at seeing a bloodied-faced woman who was immediately transferred to the intensive care unit. “Women are often pressured into giving up their rights. I even thought about giving up my job because of the violence at home, but I am glad I chose to fight for my self-esteem instead,” she reflected.

El Mostafa was relieved to see how the Police Unit for Women Victims of Violence operated, noting that it was a convenient, comfortable and safe setting where she felt understood and valued. For Fadoua el Filali, Head of Unit for Women Victims of Violence at the First Instance Court in Salé, this is what the units should be all about. “What makes me happy is when the survivor reassures me that she is safe and has received the care she came for; the care she is entitled to. It makes me happier when I see women survivors protected judicially and finding economic independence.”

Stressing the importance of an intersectional approach to ending violence against women, Leila Rhiwi, UN Women Head of Office in Morocco notes, “I would like to emphasize the power of women's economic inclusion in the fight against violence. In fact, a massive investment in women's empowerment—especially in terms of access to resources,

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MOROCCO STARTS WITH BETTER DATA

52% of women reported having been victims of domestic violence. Only **10%** of acts of violence against women, in all forms, were recorded by the police or other authority. The domestic environment is the most violent living space for **46%** of women.

These are some of the findings of the [National Survey on Violence against Women and Girls](#), produced in 2020 by Morocco's national statistical office, the **High Commission for Planning (HCP)**, with technical support of UN Women.

Through the UN Women **Women Count** program, **35** civil society service providers served as listeners and worked with the HCP to conduct the survey. This innovative approach resulted in knowledge sharing, more sensitive survey tools, and increased trust in, and pickup of, the data on the part of Morocco's civil society.

access to employment, decent income, property and social protection—the strengthening of their participation in social, cultural and political life and in the exercise of their citizenship could, in the medium and long term, change the patriarchal socio-cultural reality and prevent violence against them.”

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** Name and personal information have been changed to protect the identity of the individual*

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