

7

TURKEY: CELEBRITIES KICK INTO ACTION TO CURB VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

As in many countries, laws protecting women's rights in Turkey have had little impact due to the lack of political will and public inertia. A study on the incidence of 'honour' killings was a wake-up call to government officials and others to do something about it. An advocacy campaign, initiated by UNFPA and involving government decision makers, NGOs, the private sector and Turkish celebrities, proved remarkably successful in focusing public attention and shaping a national dialogue on violence against women. Its targeting of Turkish men was a key to its success. Among other superstars who embraced the campaign were the country's major league football players, who spread the message—'Stop violence against women!'—during half-time and in film spots on television and in cinemas across the country.

THE CONTEXT

Turkey has a population of about 73 million, which is growing at a rate of 1.4 per cent a year. Life expectancy at birth (at 68.7 years¹) is lower than the European Union (EU) average of 79 and the average of 74 for the ten countries that joined the EU in May 2004.

A 2002 household survey showed that more than a quarter of the population (28 per cent) live below the poverty line, mostly in rural areas, with 1 per cent living in extreme poverty.

Turkey witnessed far-reaching political transformations in the last century. In 1923, the country's first president founded the Republic of Turkey on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and served until his death in 1938. Since the Second World War, Turkey has mostly been led by coalition governments. More recently, the Justice and Development Party secured a majority of seats in parliament and has consistently pursued political and economic stability and reform, with the goal of membership in the European Union.

TURKEY AND CEDAW

The Government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. Still today, gender equality is a key development issue that is publicly debated in Turkey.

Building institutional capacity is one of the most important tools for implementing policies promoting gender

equality. In Turkey, this process started in the 1990s with the establishment of the General Directorate on the Status of Women. Since that time, legal reforms have been passed that eliminate fundamental discriminatory provisions against women and expand the boundaries of equality and human rights. In 1998, a law on domestic violence (Law on Family Protection) was adopted. In 2001, the Turkish Grand National Assembly ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. One year later, the new Civil Code was adopted, bringing Turkish family law in line with the EU, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW. The new Penal Code passed by parliament in September 2004 contains improved protections for women's rights.

Despite these positive developments, the situation of women in Turkey remains a challenge for the Government, political parties and civil society, both in terms of basic development indicators as well as women's participation in decision-making and the more symbolic aspects of their representation in the public arena.

Violence against Women

Violence against women is widespread in Turkey and thrives in a culture of silence and denial. Gender-based violence, in most of its forms, is accepted as a way to resolve differences within the family. Social acceptance of such violence and fear of intervention in what is perceived as internal family affairs are the main reasons why it persists. Compounding the problem are stereo-

¹ According to the *Human Development Report 2005*, published for the United Nations Development Programme.

typical views about gender roles and the fact that women and girls do not recognize that the violence they experience in their everyday lives is a violation of their human rights.

A 1994 survey of Turkish men by the Family Research Institution revealed that 34 per cent of married women have been subjected to spousal violence. Another study, conducted among middle- and high-income women, showed that 23 percent of them had been assaulted or beaten by their husbands. According to the latest Demographic and Health Survey for Turkey (2003), 39 per cent of Turkish women surveyed believe that wife beating can be justified. When adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 were asked the same question, 63 per cent said that wife beating could be justified. These figures suggest the urgent need for greater awareness-raising among both men and women, targeting, especially, the younger generation.

Passage of the Law for the Protection of the Family (1998) and changes in the Civil Law (2001) and Penal Code (2004) are all helping address violence against women in Turkey. For example, more lenient jail sentences in the case of marital rape have been abolished, and female students can no longer be subjected to virginity tests. The new Municipalities Law (2004) requires all cities with a population over 50,000 and all metropolitan areas to establish shelters for women seeking protection.

Government efforts to combat violence against women have focused on awareness-raising through media campaigns, training of service providers and support for a few NGO-run shelters. Since the 1980s, women's organizations have been most active in providing support services for survivors, though their efforts have been hindered by the lack of steady funding. Both NGOs and government institutions lack the resources and coordination to effectively combat violence against women, leading to partial, redundant and inconsistent interventions. As a consequence, support services for victims are limited and often inappropriate.

For many decades, 'honour' killings—murder by immediate family members of women suspected of being unchaste—have been a cause for concern in Turkey. There is increased commitment on the part of the Turkish Government to address the issue in more depth, evidenced in part by the establishment of a parliamentary 'Inquiry Committee' for determining the causes of violence against women and children and honour crimes.

THE UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAMME The Advocacy Campaign

The 'Stop Violence against Women' advocacy campaign began during the last year of the Third UNFPA Country Programme for Turkey, which ended in December 2005. At the request of the Government, activities are continuing during the current and Fourth Country Programme.

The main objectives of the Third Country Programme, which had a core budget of \$5 million, were to contribute to the following goals: (1) further increase access to integrated reproductive health services and improve the quality of reproductive health information and services, particularly those delivered by the public sector; (2) develop adolescent reproductive health services and address the educational needs of young people in terms of sexual and reproductive health; (3) further political commitment and resource mobilization at the national and community levels for the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, including its gender component; and (4) ensure the availability of the necessary information and data systems to monitor progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and other global goals emanating from international conferences.

Under the advocacy component of this programme, UNFPA provided support to the 'Stop Violence against Women' campaign. UNFPA also helped build the institutional capacity of the General Directorate on the Status of Women and, in this context, supported the design and development of the first nationwide project on Violence against Women, which the European Community accepted for funding.

The Fourth Country Programme promotes human rights, and is based on ICPD principles as well as those of the national legislation of Turkey. Capacity-building is at the core of UNFPA's overall strategy and covers institutional, managerial, technical, human resource and operational aspects of strengthening national capacities in population and development strategies, reproductive health and gender.

The continuation of the advocacy campaign is positioned under the gender component of the UNFPA programme, which focuses mainly on combating violence against women by supporting the development of protection and prevention mechanisms, action plans and policies, raising awareness through campaigns and training, and strengthening the capacities of local and national government and NGOs for the advancement of women's rights.

THE PROJECT

Summer 2004: “Seizing the moment—getting the timing right”

Starting in the mid-1990s, various groups in Turkey initiated small-scale activities to address domestic violence. NGOs, in particular, carried out awareness campaigns, served as advocates, and prepared and distributed proposals for the development of mechanisms for preventing violence against women and protecting victims. These efforts resulted in a number of legislative changes. However, patriarchal decision-making structures and social inertia meant that little was achieved in terms of changing behaviour and implementing the new laws.

At that time, the adoption of a new Penal Code was needed to make Turkey ready for EU accession talks. But parliament commenced its summer recess without completing the job, and many of the unresolved paragraphs, which had been widely debated in public and in the media, related to violence against women, honour killings and rape.

It is in this context and at this time that UNFPA was able to play a strategic role as catalyst for change.

July 2004: “UNFPA should work on honour killings”

UNFPA-Turkey, like other Country Offices around the world, celebrated World Population Day on 11 July 2004. Riding the wave of current debate at the time, UNFPA decided to take the first steps towards what would later become a multi-stakeholder and long-term advocacy campaign aimed at combating violence against women.

Starting from the view that good advocacy needs sound evidence, UNFPA set about collecting data and human-interest stories on honour killings. Previously, honour killings had been talked about in the abstract, but no adequate data were available. For many years, honour killings had been associated with certain regions of Turkey. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that honour killings could be found in every region of the country as well as in some European countries where Turkish minority groups exist.

In a first crude approximation of data, UNFPA-Turkey conducted a small review of media coverage of honour killings over the previous five years. When all the cases were put together, the effect was startling. For the first time it became possible to publicly quantify the murders as at least one per month and to demonstrate that honour killings were a nationwide phenomenon—and not just one isolated to southeastern regions. The coverage of

World Population Day and the findings about honour killings created a sensation in the media and laid the foundation for UNFPA’s role as advocate and catalyst in the area of violence against women.

Immediately following this public relations success, UNFPA-Turkey decided to conduct a large-scale survey on honour killings. It shared the idea with a partner non-governmental organization (NGO), the Population Association, which had recently been established to conduct multidisciplinary research on ICPD-related issues. Experts in the field were brought together and a year-long research project commenced in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project was presented to the public on 25 November 2005, the International Day for Combating Violence against Women.

Through evidence-based advocacy, UNFPA was able to focus public attention on issues critical to women’s rights.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

August 2004: “We have to do SOMETHING national on this issue”

In August 2004, after lengthy discussions both internally and externally, UNFPA-Turkey decided that it should move from a narrow focus on honour killings to a broad-based advocacy campaign on combating violence against women more generally. Since the main constraints to action on the issue are to be found in both the political and public spheres, it was decided that any campaign needed representation by Government, parliament, NGOs, the private sector and celebrities. In partnership with the General Directorate on the Status of Women and the state minister’s office, UNFPA began preparing for the campaign, which was to run for one year, starting on 25 November 2004. Activities included:

- *Identification of an advertising company that would do pro-bono work on the campaign.* This included concept development, messaging, logo design, promotional materials and mobilization of media sponsors for broadcasting of an ‘infomercial’ (film spot). The key concept developed by the Istanbul-based advertising agency that was selected was ‘men talk to men’. The simple message was ‘Stop violence against women’. The firm used its public relations contacts to identify 15 media sponsors for the campaign.
- *Selection of and briefing of a celebrity spokesperson for the campaign.* Actress Demet Akbağ was asked to be the spokesperson for the campaign. After her positive response, an intensive briefing period began. In addition to her role as spokesperson, Ms. Akbağ

also mobilized other actors and musicians to support the initiative.

- *Environmental scanning for potential partners that would fit the concept of the campaign: Men talk to men.* The ideal partner turned out to be the Turkish Football Federation, because of the popularity of football (known as soccer in the United States) among men in Turkey. The president of the federation accepted the idea immediately. He also promised to mobilize all the football teams in Turkey's super league.

Journalists were also important partners, so UNFPA's longstanding relationship with the Turkish Journalists' Federation was revived. It was decided that a competition for young journalists would be held on the issue of violence against women and honour killings. It was also decided to include in ongoing media training information on how to report and write a news story on violence against women in a gender-sensitive way.

- *Scripting and production of an advocacy film.* All the arrangements to produce the film spot were completed, and it was shot and edited two weeks before the launch of the campaign. The spot featured two male actors and the captain of the national football team, along with the campaign spokesperson.
- *Resource mobilization.* In addition to in-kind sponsorships from media companies and pro-bono work done by advertising and public relations companies, additional resources were needed to realize various parts of the campaign.
- The campaign was launched in Istanbul on 24 November 2004, with the participation of the state minister, the campaign spokesperson, officials from the General Directorate on the Status of Women, the Turkish Football Federation, the Turkish Journalists Federation, NGO partners and the national press. Both the timing and location were selected to ensure full media coverage immediately before and on 25 November.

After the launch, public information activities were initiated. The film spot was shown on 15 national television channels for 20 days with the sponsorship of various media groups. It was also converted to a 35mm film and was shown in movie theatres throughout the country during March 2005. Advertising distribution companies supported the campaign by distributing the film free of charge.

Interviews were held on both national and local television and radio with the participation of the minister, the UNFPA representative, the UNFPA advocacy coordinator and the celebrity spokesperson.

Two weeks after the launch, in an activity spearheaded by the Turkish Football Federation and 18 super league football teams, the campaign reached a vast audience of men watching TV during an important football weekend. Players from all 18 teams came onto the field wearing shirts bearing the campaign message and carrying banners protesting violence against women. The main TV station sponsoring the games showed the campaign logo throughout the broadcast and aired the film spot at half-time.

Effective public information campaigns need broad-based commitment from multiple players in society. With widespread support, such campaigns can be catalysts for change, especially when accompanied by policy-oriented advocacy strategies.

December 2004: "Campaign support from the private sector—enemy, competition or partnership?"

While UNFPA and its partners were preparing the public information campaign, a private media company called Hürriyet (that publishes the largest-circulation newspaper in Turkey) launched its own 'No to Domestic Violence!' campaign. Initially it looked as if the two campaigns were competing with each other.

A week after the launch of the national campaign, the corporate communication managers of Hürriyet paid a visit to UNFPA. They expressed their concern about having two public information campaigns running at the same time with similar logos and messages. They suggested that UNFPA choose Hürriyet as a campaign partner and merge the two campaigns. UNFPA indicated that their ultimate goal was to form a broad coalition and substantive partnership with all key stakeholders to combat violence against women. Moreover, both the Government and the media company had reservations about working together, since they both wanted to preserve their independence. In the end, UNFPA decided to support both campaigns and give time for both parties to get closer to each other through various activities.

The Hürriyet campaign was also received with skepticism by some NGOs, which had the view that the media perpetuates violence against women through sensationalism and sexism. Over time, however, they accepted Hürriyet's sincere interest and engagement on the issue. Hürriyet achieved this turnaround through a series of consultations as well as concrete initiatives, such as establishing a women's group that now evaluates every article they publish from a gender perspective and provides comments publicly in the newspaper. The company also provided training to their journalists on issues such

as gender equality, conflict resolution techniques and ways to combat violence against women.

UNFPA's determination to create a multi-stakeholder alliance for change allowed new partners to become involved. Strong and diverse coalition are needed for systemic change.

RESULTS

Spring 2005: "Let's move beyond public information, into action, with Hürriyet"

The Hürriyet campaign was launched in November 2004 with the goal of taking a public stance against domestic violence and to initiate social transformation. A community-based training programme was developed and taken directly to poor communities in Istanbul through a mobile counselling and training project.

After the first meeting in Ankara, UNFPA decided to meet with Hürriyet one more time. Hürriyet proposed organizing a joint international conference on violence against women, and UNFPA agreed. The Fund began working with Hürriyet not only as a partner in the international conference but as a campaign partner. The purpose of the conference was to accelerate action on the issue in Turkey by learning about 'best practices' that have been used to combat violence against women around the world. The conference was held with the participation of all relevant international actors as well as the new state minister, the General Directorate on the Status of Women and leading national NGOs.

In the end, although the two campaigns couldn't be merged, UNFPA helped forge a strong partnership for action between key national partners by supporting both campaigns and an international conference.

Spring 2005: "The European Commission and Government call on UNFPA for help"

In a separate but related set of events, UNFPA was able to move its efforts from public information to concrete support for legislative implementation.

The public information campaigns had increased the demands on the Turkish Government to strengthen its efforts to address violence against women. However, the resources and capacity of the General Directorate on the Status of Women were extremely limited. In response, the European Commission announced that it was ready to fund capacity-building of the General Directorate as well as initiatives related to violence against women if UNFPA could help the Government design a substantive and high-quality project.

UNFPA immediately contracted technical expertise and drafting support to develop a proposal, which later received the full endorsement of Government and the European Commission. UNFPA was also selected as the implementing partner for the project component related to violence against women. The project, which will start in late 2006, aims to improve reporting and surveillance of gender-based violence, train government employees, and develop a model for protection services for survivors of violence. In a recent development, UNFPA has also been called upon to support the development of the first project for the building of shelters.

UNFPA's ability to combine advocacy efforts with sound technical support and operational capability created the perfect conditions to accelerate change at the right moment in time.

May 2005: "We need to regroup—a new state minister is on board!"

In the middle of the public information campaign in 2005, one of the main players in the partnership changed. A new state minister was appointed, and UNFPA immediately asked for a meeting to share its past experiences. The previous state minister felt a good deal of ownership of the campaign, and after the launch, she established a special commission on violence with the participation of members of parliament, NGOs, academicians and public officials. With the change in state ministers, the campaign activities slowed down, while partners waited to assess the new minister's priorities.

Planning flexibility is necessary to ensure that UNFPA stays relevant through changing development and political contexts.

May 2005 "A new player in town...a choir wants to contribute to the campaign!"

The opportunity to engage the new minister in the campaign came from an unlikely source. Inspired by the public information campaign, members of the State Polyphonic Choir requested a meeting with UNFPA in which they presented their ideas on how they could contribute.

Choir members understood that music is an important tool to reach the hearts and minds of the general public. They suggested holding a concert of Turkish folk songs (adapted to choir) related to women and violence against women. The new minister immediately endorsed the idea, and the first concert was held on 25 November 2005, with her participation. The concert was accompanied by a photography exhibition of 100 Turkish women photographers, which was organized to raise funds for women's shelters. A second concert was

held in March 2006 in Ankara, again with the participation of the minister and this time with women and girls from local community centres. The Government has expressed the wish to repeat the concert in other cities of Turkey.

Success breeds success. The flexibility of a programme to allow new partners to join in and to allow existing partnerships to develop is key to the success of any advocacy effort.

September 2005: “The honour killings report is finished. When should we launch it?”

The honour killings report, which had been commissioned a year earlier, was completed in September 2005. The report’s main findings are as follows:

- While honour exists as an important concept within society, honour itself should be de-linked from acts of crime and violence.
- Youth are surprisingly more accepting and supportive of killing in the name of honour than their elders. This view is reinforced by recent findings that the majority of young women expect to be beaten as part of their married life. These findings show that a significant effort needs to be made to change the attitudes of youth through education.
- At the same time, there are a number of initiatives and policies to eradicate the notion of honour killings as acceptable within Turkish society.

The three partners, UNFPA, UNDP and the Population Association were keen to obtain maximum policy impact from the report, so the timing of the launch was crucial. While the report was being prepared, a parliamentary Inquiry Committee was established on honour killings to investigate the causes and consequences of the murders. This provided the perfect opportunity to present the findings and recommendations of the report directly to decision makers in Turkey. On 15 November, a special session was held with the Inquiry Committee and UNFPA/UNDP, in which researchers shared the results of the report with members of parliament, and a press release was sent to all media correspondents. Many findings and recommendations of the report found their way into the report of the parliamentary committee.

The report, which had been commissioned for awareness-raising purposes, achieved its goals and more. The combination of the public information campaign on violence against women, the conference on domestic violence and the trust placed in UNFPA’s ability to facilitate and act as a catalyst propelled

the findings directly into the national decision-making process.

December 2005: “We need to get more private sector companies involved”

While the developments described above were taking place, the partnership with Hürriyet was deepening. The enthusiasm of its chief executive officer was central to this development. The domestic violence conference brought many private sector representatives from international companies to Turkey, many of whom play key roles in combating violence against women. Today, Hürriyet is committed to laying the foundation for a ‘Corporate Alliance to Combat Violence against Women’ in Turkey. The company is planning to conduct a workforce survey—designed with technical assistance from UNFPA—about domestic violence. Based on this survey, and with the support of the Fund, it will develop a company policy on combating violence against women. The chief executive officer of Hürriyet and UNFPA are also planning to organize a meeting for other women CEOs of companies in Turkey to garner their support and spread the idea of a corporate alliance among key businesses. The purpose of the alliance will be to increase awareness, to provide workplace-based support and services for survivors of violence, and to forge related community projects.

In the Turkish context, UNFPA has found that working with the private sector, particularly a large media company, provides tremendous leverage for advocacy activities. It also provides an opportunity to test new approaches to behaviour change and service provision, which opens the way for innovation and creative solutions.

MEDIATION AND NEGOTIATION

UNFPA encountered many political and practical problems throughout the process. Coalition-building is never easy when multiple interests are at stake. Changing government counterparts and the limited human and financial capacity of counterpart institutions also made project implementation difficult. Other problems related to the sensitivity of the issue and the general level of denial encountered on many fronts.

The partnership with Hürriyet was problematic—at first. In a sense, there was a clash of cultures between UNFPA’s approach, which is based on consensus and coalition-building and the company’s way of working. However, both parties decided to continue their joint efforts since their strategic interests were the same. Close collaboration, collective problem-solving and successful implementation of joint activities solidified the partnership over time.

PARTNERS

- The *state ministry responsible for women's issues* is the lead partner in the campaign.
- The *General Directorate on the Status of Women* was UNFPA's main partner in the project under the Third Country Programme.
- The *Turkish Football Federation* supported the campaign by mobilizing super league football clubs and granting permission for the clubs' involvement.
- The *Turkish Journalists Federation*, comprising 62 journalists associations, was the main partner for two major activities concerning media professionals—the Young Journalists Award and media training.
- In addition to her role as *campaign spokesperson*, Demet Akbağ also mobilized other actors and musicians to support the campaign and has been working with UNFPA to increase its public visibility.
- The members of the *State Polyphonic Choir*, a government-owned institution, also give visibility to the campaign by using their artistic talents and reaching out to people through Turkish folk music.
- *Media sponsors (national television channels)* agreed to broadcast the campaign film spot throughout Turkey.
- The '*Pitstop*' advertising agency provided pro-bono work for the campaign.
- Within the scope of the two campaigns, UNFPA collaborated with *Hürriyet newspaper* to organize an international conference on combating domestic violence.

LESSONS LEARNED

When UNFPA decided to do something at the national level to combat violence against women, the mission statement was 'combating violence against women with the collaboration of everyone in society, from Government to private sector, from NGOs to international organizations'. At the same time, UNFPA also understood that if it did not have the full support and ownership of Government, the campaign would not succeed. This proved true throughout the process.

UNFPA's role as a public catalyst and facilitator also meant learning to deal with the competing interests of stakeholders. The role was new to many UNFPA staff, so the learning curve was fast and occasionally frustrating. In the process, UNFPA staff learned the importance of:

- Gauging the right timing for UNFPA interventions
- Having hard data on social issues
- Understanding every stakeholder's agenda and representing them faithfully to overcome perceived conflicts of interest
- Getting all partners around a table and making them talk. Human contact is often necessary to clarify issues.

It was also recognized that success requires a combination of political, technical and operational skills, which can be applied separately or together for maximum impact.

Other lessons learned:

Effective public information campaigns need broad-based commitment from multiple players in society to be effective. Such campaigns can also be catalysts for change when accompanied by policy-oriented advocacy strategies.

Detailed but flexible planning is essential to enable all partners to stay on track and to take advantage of new opportunities as they emerge. Working with multiple partners requires a highly organized programme, however that does not mean that plans should not change. When different partners join the process, the programme should be reviewed. For example, once *Hürriyet* became involved, the programme and the activities of the campaign were reviewed and another large event was added. Because of the campaign's high visibility, other partners, including the Polyphonic Choir, joined in and the programme was changed again.

UNFPA's greatest contribution was the use of its UN platform and technical skills to facilitate an enabling environment for public awareness, partnership-building, collective learning, programme development and the strengthening of capacity. UNFPA will continue its role as catalyst throughout the Fourth UNFPA Country Programme for Turkey. However, it is clear that the public discourse about violence against women in the country has already begun to shift.

In spite of limited resources—human and financial—considerable change can be achieved through effective planning and pooling of resources, proving that the sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts.