

ENVISAGING THE FUTURE OF POLICING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



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Cover photo source: Police Chief Magazine

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In September 2022, the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association held a major event series called the 'Marketplace of Ideas', which showcased practical and innovative approaches to addressing public health issues that have traditionally been criminalised or over-policed, with a particular focus on policing and policing alternatives. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was a major supporter of the event series.

This report summarises the key learnings and discussions stemming from the event's session on 'Preventing Violence against Women and Girls'. In this session, four innovative programs from around the globe were selected to present their unique approaches to preventing violence against women and girls through cross-sector collaboration between police and public health.

In this report, we look across these four case studies to examine their key elements, discuss their common learnings in terms of their collaborative responses to domestic violence, and demonstrate the importance of building cross-sectoral partnerships to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and girls.

A video recording of the full sessions can be viewed here:
<https://glepha.com/moi-video>

INTRODUCTION:

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH INNOVATIVE POLICE PARTNERSHIPS

Violence against women and children is a global problem. The World Health Organisation estimate that one in three women and up to a billion children experience violence during their lifetimes (WHO Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018). While women mainly suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners, children suffer violence from parents, caregivers, peers, and strangers. The consequences of such violence are significant and can affect victims' physical and mental health as well as their sexual and reproductive health.

Responses to violence against women and girls have mainly focused at the individual level, seeking to improve interventions after violence has occurred. Increasingly, it has become best practice to implement programs that prevent violence from occurring in the first place, and to address the broader individual, community and societal factors that contribute to the prevalence of violence (UN Women, 2015). Examples of violence prevention approaches include trauma-informed approaches to policing and understanding adverse childhood experiences.

A central focus of many violence prevention approaches is to strengthen the response of the criminal justice sector, and of the police in particular, since positive encounters with the police is critical to the recovery of survivors (UNODC/UN Women, 2021). Since navigating the criminal justice system can be confusing for victims, police and justice agencies play a crucial role in ensuring that women and girls who experience violence receive high-quality services. Better cross-sectoral coordination between the police and other agencies, such as health and social services, is critical to improving the safety of survivors (UNODC/UN Women, 2021).

Collaboration between agencies, both inside and outside of government, reduces duplication of efforts, allows collaborating agencies to better use and share resources, and encourages the sharing of innovative prevention practices across jurisdictions and sectors (Carrington et al, 2022).

In this report, we present four examples of programs that are making strides to prevent violence against women and girls in different cultural settings. These programs draw on a range of partnership configurations between police and other agencies to undertake their activities. These programs include:

- A public-private partnership program between the Spanish National Police's Women and Family Affairs Unit and the Easy Reading Institute which produces materials that are accessible for people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence.
- Nation-wide stakeholder consultations carried out by the Indian National Police Foundation on how safety can be improved for women and children in India.
- A research and training program aimed at improving frontline responses to high impact domestic violence through better intersectoral co-operation between police and social and health workers in Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Scotland and Slovenia.
- A national campaign for raising awareness about domestic violence in Romania, conducted by Necuvinte Association, a local NGO, in partnership with the General Inspectorate of the National Police.

CASE STUDY 1:

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE SPANISH NATIONAL POLICE'S WOMEN AND FAMILY AFFAIRS UNIT AND THE EASY READING INSTITUTE

The Women and Family Affairs Unit of the Spanish National Police (The Unit) holds the responsibility for investigating gender-based crimes, domestic violence and sexual violence. The Unit provides services and protection to vulnerable victims, including to minors, victims with intellectual disabilities, and the elderly. Police officers in the Unit are specially trained to deal with gender-based violence, domestic violence and sexual crimes, including violence perpetrated by parents against their children, by children against their parents, violence perpetrated by men against women, and by women against men, by same sex partners, between siblings, against people with disabilities, and people who have been placed into special care (custody or guardianship in public and private facilities).

The Unit works to address the needs of women and children impacted by violence in a multidisciplinary victim-centred way, bringing together prevention, investigation and victim protection. This requires the police to collaborate across sectors, especially with health and social services. Victims who have disabilities, including cognitive disabilities, are particularly vulnerable and frequently need additional support to eliminate the barriers that prevent them from seeking care when they experience violence.

The rate of violence against people with disabilities is high compared with the general population. According to the Report on the Situation of Women from Minority Groups in the European Union (2003-2019) issued by the European Parliament, almost 80% of women with disabilities have been victims of violence and are four times more likely to suffer violence than women without disabilities. In Spain, a 2019 gender-based violence survey collected information from 42,000 women and found that 31%



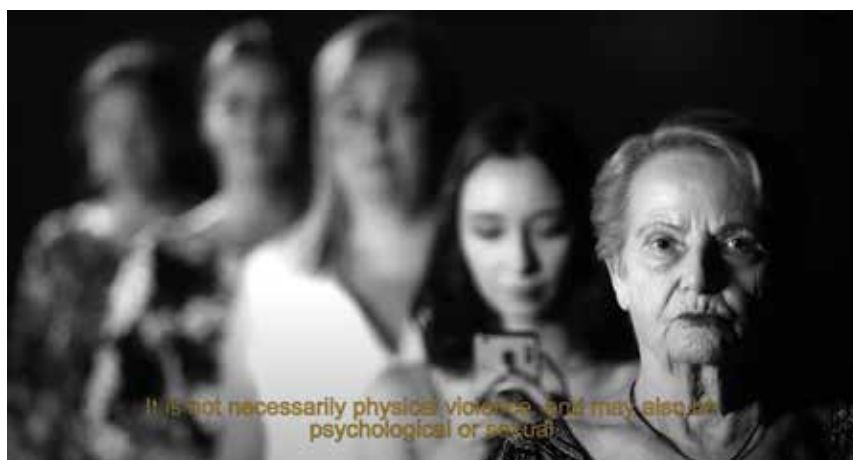
of women with a disability reported they had been subject to a form violence (physical, sexual or psychological) by their current or former partner. Worse still, 17.5% of those women reported that their disability was a consequence of that violence.

A collaborative program between The Unit and the Easy Reading Institute (*Instituto Lectura Fácil*) assists victims with cognitive disabilities to access police documentation presented in an easily understandable format. Since 2018, the Unit has formally partnered with the Easy Reading Institute, an organisation that promotes cognitive accessibility and has a history of partnering with government agencies to ensure that information is understandable and available for people who may have physical, sensory, or cognitive challenges. Adapting police documents is crucial to ensure people with disabilities who are victims of violence can use police and judicial services.

The Easy Reading Institute has designed an innovative tool that writes text that is easier to read and to comprehend by people with disabilities, empowering them to participate equally in public life. The tool is particularly valuable for people with intellectual disabilities, with mental and behavioural illnesses and disorders, hearing impairment and people with difficulty in reading comprehension, due to low literacy, limited education, or cultural barriers.

Trained staff from the Easy Reading Institute adapt the base text using specific rules about grammar, lexicon, spelling and style. The text is then laid out in an accessible format using visual aids, typography and composition to improve understanding. For example, the text is adapted with larger font sizes, text boxes that explain terminology and difficult words and with shorter, simpler sentences. The adapted material is then validated by people with different types of disabilities, as well as by technical experts to ensure the adapted text is fit-for-purpose and easy to comprehend.

The collaboration between the Women's and Family Affairs Unit and Easy Reading Institute has improved victim satisfaction with the police and has reduced barriers for victims seeking services from the police. Once an incident of sexual or gender-based violence becomes known to the Unit, either because a victim has reported the incident to the police or because someone else has made a report via a hotline, a protocol is triggered which ensures professionals such as judges, doctors and social services coordinate with the police to ensure that the victim is given priority and privacy. A risk assessment is conducted using an IT tool called 'VIOGEN', and a police officer is assigned to the victim. Even where the victim is not sure whether or not to file a complaint, the Unit officers provide them with procedural information and other resources that are easy to understand and tailored to a range of cognitive abilities. Sign-language



interpreters for people with hearing impairments and foreign-language interpreters are also available to assist victims who may need these types of support.

The collaboration demonstrates the importance of using accessible materials to ensure that victims do not suffer secondary victimisation when seeking services from the police and justice agencies. Although it can be challenging to provide accessible materials that cater to all forms of disabilities, the Unit has been recognised as a leader among government agencies in providing accessible services for vulnerable people. Future plans for strengthening the program include making the Spanish National Police website more accessible and training all police officers on the importance of providing accessible information.

CASE STUDY 2:

NATION-WIDE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE SAFETY FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INDIA

The Indian Police Foundation is a multi-disciplinary think tank that works toward police reform and the improvement of policing through research, capacity building and policy advocacy. The Foundation is driven by a coalition of progressive police professionals and citizen stakeholders who believe that positive transformation in the Indian Police is possible, through collective action by the police, citizenry, the State and Central Governments, as well as political leadership.

In 2017, the Indian Police Foundation launched a nationwide series of stakeholder consultations to gather information and ideas on how to ensure better safety for women and children through the participation of state police organisations, police leaders, field officers, lawyers, prosecutors, non-governmental and civil society organisations, social workers, activists, academics, the media, and members of the community.

The initiative was launched following public demonstrations and protests that had surfaced around the country in relation to some horrific cases of sexual violence, gang rape, murder of women and the sexual exploitation





of children. Although the police had implemented some initiatives to address violence against women and children, police agencies fell under heavy criticism for the high numbers of sexual assault, domestic violence and rape cases still prevalent in society.

The aim of the stakeholder consultations was to discuss the problems facing women and children in the community, and to map out possible solutions. Cross-cutting issues included the sexual harassment of women in public spaces, on public transport and in the workplace, the sexual exploitation of children, cyber harassment of women and children, trafficking of women and children, and domestic and intimate partner violence.

Specific focus issues were also raised and discussed during the consultations, for example, the safety of women and children in Bengaluru who work night shifts in the information technology industry, and issues relevant to the indigenous people of the North-Eastern States in Shillong. Participants also exchanged their experiences and ideas about addressing patriarchy and combatting human trafficking, such as strategies for supporting victims through the criminal justice process.

The consultations were attended and supported by high-profile leadership from across India including the former Chief Justice of India, Home Minister of Telangana, Chief Ministers of Odisha and Haryana, and Deputy Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. The first state consultations were held in Bengaluru, followed by Hyderabad, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Pune, Shillong, Bhubaneswar and Haryana. Consultations were very well attended and attracted as many as 700 participants in some cities.

These stakeholder consultations are a good example of evidence-based policing in action. The aims of the consultations were to map and understand the local, regional and cultural issues associated with sexual and gender-based violence, and to evaluate the existing security practices through the eyes of various stakeholders themselves. The consultations were innovative as they brought together multiple stakeholder groups across India who are involved in security policy formulation and fostered joint ownership of the response strategies.

During the consultations, stakeholders were encouraged to speak freely and candidly in order to bring different perspectives and practical ideas to the table. The dialogues successfully resulted in the issue of violence against women being given greater priority by the police, including the opening of more 'help desks' for women in police stations across the country.



CASE STUDY 3:

IMPROVING FRONTLINE RESPONSES TO HIGH IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (IMPRODOVA) PROGRAM IN AUSTRIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, HUNGARY, PORTUGAL, SCOTLAND AND SLOVENIA

The IMPRODOVA program aims to improve interagency cooperation among frontline responders – police, social workers, health care workers, and NGOs – in high-impact domestic violence cases in Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Scotland and Slovenia. To do this, the program draws on an integrated approach to addressing domestic violence. The program works across 16 teams from eight member states of the European Union, including police organisations, universities and colleges, health sciences faculties, research organisations, public health facilities and non-governmental organisations.

To date, the IMPRODOVA program has undertaken extensive research, collected literature reviews and carried out over 300 key stakeholder interviews. It focuses on risk assessments, analysing case documentation, development of training, and strengthening interagency collaboration between the police, social work and public health sectors. Risk assessments are essential for preventing domestic violence incidents from turning fatal. However, the program has found that there is wide variability in policies and requirements for risk assessments across countries and sectors. Inadequate directives on the use of risk assessments have been found to directly impact on the quality and use of risk assessment tools among the police and health sectors, and in turn, have consequences for victim safety.

The availability and depth of case documentation also varies across sectors. Although case documentation can be used as vital evidence in court, in some countries or jurisdictions only case documentation or information from the police or medical sector are considered to be evidence, while documentation from the social services sector is

disregarded. In addition, the police have relatively well-developed case documentation but may vacillate between relying on their 'gut feel' and using risk assessment tools. In the medical sector, risk assessments are rarely used and case documentation is usually limited to mental and physical issues. In the social services sector, risk assessment and case documentation are underdeveloped.

Professional training is not offered comprehensively nor systematically to the frontline workers who typically respond to domestic violence cases. This is a missed opportunity since the more comprehensively frontline workers are trained, the better equipped they are to prevent, detect and respond to domestic violence cases. Well-informed and well-trained personnel are also more equipped to respond quickly to support victims. Ideally, the program recommends that at least one police officer who specialises in domestic violence should be placed at each police unit.

The program has identified a need to provide training opportunities for police and other frontline responders in order to facilitate inter-agency learning. Through its research, the program has found that official requests for interagency co-operation in the management of domestic abuse are infrequent, unless there is a protocol in place for multi-agency risk assessment meetings. Unfortunately, training content that encourages interagency co-operation is often missing from training modules.

IMPRODOVA's research highlights the importance of first defining the priority target group affected by domestic violence in order to form appropriate interagency partnerships and develop appropriate interventions. Ideally, partnerships are recognised officially and led by a financially independent steering committee that is set up and managed with the goal of exchanging information to manage high-risk cases of domestic violence. Having specialised contact people in each organisation to facilitate the transfer of information across agencies also play an important role in building strong partnerships. Multistakeholder cooperation works best when it is based on trust, which requires that organisations are appreciative in their tone with one another, hierarchies

are structurally flat, and case referrals take the shortest route between organisations.

The program has also identified several other factors that are essential for the success of an intervention. These include strong vision and leadership whereby advocates push for change. It is often necessary to advocate for changes in police regulations in order to improve cooperation with other organisations and the exchange of sensitive information. Organisational learning is another important factor for success since different agencies need to gain an understanding of each other's operational systems, limitations and available options if they are to collaborate effectively.

During the years it was in operation, the program faced several challenges. Firstly, it was difficult to engage the medical sector in the research, which mirrors more general difficulties with including the medical sector in the prevention, detection and response to domestic abuse. Secondly, judges – especially family court judges – can play a critical role in interagency networks focussed on preventing domestic abuse but they often resist collaborating because of concerns around their independence.

IMPRODOVA's main achievements include the development of a new risk assessment tool for use by partner organisations which uses input from victims and has been translated into 15 different languages. Evidence from the French Police Force shows that victims of domestic violence who have used the assessment tool are more likely to press charges against their perpetrators. The program has also developed several training tools for frontline professionals (police, health workers and social services), which are freely available on the program's website. These tools including a training module on policy development, recommendations for improving data collection, and a module on risk assessment and case management. These modules can be adapted to suit local needs.

While the project recently drew to a close, the majority of the IMPRODOVA consortiums continue to work together, now within the

framework of a successor project, IMPROVE, which focuses on removing barriers that make it difficult for people who are victims of violence to seek help.



Photo source: IMPRODOVA training modules draw on resources from the World Health Organisation

CASE STUDY 4:

'BROKEN WINGS' – A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ROMANIA

'Broken Wings' is a national campaign launched by the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police in partnership with Necuvinte Association, an NGO specialised in supporting women impacted by domestic violence. The campaign is the first such initiative to raise awareness of, provide information about, and prevent domestic abuse in Romania. The project aimed to correct problematic messaging by the police that gave the impression that domestic abuse is limited to isolated incidents or specific areas of the country, when in fact it is a nation-wide problem.

The campaign's activities began in earnest in 2016 and ran for two years, although the campaign was initially slow to be adopted by the Romanian National Police. The privately-funded campaign aimed to debunk common myths and stereotypes around domestic abuse, provide women with information, connect them to sources of help, prevent women being incarcerated for killing their abusive partners because they are unable to get help, and improve reporting of domestic violence cases. The name of the campaign, Broken Wings, refers to women that are broken by their experiences of abuse, broken again because they are convicted of murdering their partners, and then incarcerated for long periods of time.

The campaign produced a documentary film (also entitled Broken Wings), which was filmed at a women's prison in Romania over the course of the project's first year. The documentary presents the stories of women who have been convicted of killing their intimate partners after enduring years of violent abuse. It presents women's emotional descriptions of the abuse they suffered and contrasts this with the law enforcement sector's often dispassionate, procedural response. The film highlights that domestic abuse is prevalent in Romania, just like everywhere in the world. It also provides a vivid illustration of the consequences for women



when they do not seek or are not provided with help to address the abuse they are facing.

The campaign produced information materials for victims of domestic violence, including distributing more than 800,000 copies of a 'Safety Guide' containing

information about Romanian law and free government services across more than 3500 urban and rural police stations across the country. The project also produced a poster which police officers put up in apartment buildings. The poster lists the officer's name and the local police station's phone number that victims of domestic violence who need assistance can call. This reinforced the idea that help is available from a particular person at the police station, rather just providing an anonymous helpline number.

Police officers who were involved in the campaign were required to wear uniforms when working with the public as a way of sending a clear message that the police supported the objectives of the campaign and were available and willing to help victims who came forward. This was specified in a formal agreement signed by the police force, with the objective of shifting the public perception of the police as 'enforcers' who discourage victims from making complaints to a new perception in which the police are a valuable source of help and support.

The *Broken Wings* project also undertook a range of awareness raising activities – on television, in the newspaper, on radio, using well-known Romanian media personalities – to inform people affected by domestic violence that the government, NGOs and police can offer free assistance and support services. The police also distributed information materials about Romanian legislation and available support services to companies and organisations with large numbers of female employees.

To maximise its impact further, the project engaged a range of other local stakeholders to take part in the campaign, including social services, city mayors, local governments, firefighters and other public institutions that typically respond in an emergency situation. Through these networks, the project expanded the reach of information to the public, creating awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence in communities by drawing on local statistics, and helping people to understand their role in responding appropriately to domestic violence. Initially, the project only involved police who were involved in crime prevention activities, but gradually expanded to include public order, emergency responders, and specialised units such as those focused on homicide and sexual offences.

Over the project's lifespan, the campaign resulted in numerous positive impacts including spurring law reform, providing information to victims raising awareness among the police and general public, and increasing reporting rates of domestic violence. The main achievement of the campaign was that the Romanian police repositioned domestic violence as a stated priority in the year after the campaign ended, and to date, domestic violence continues to be an official police priority.



DISCUSSION

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THESE CASE STUDY PROGRAMS?

The four programs showcased in this report are positive examples of police services that have developed alternative approaches to addressing violence against women and girls by building cross-sectoral partnerships. Although these four case studies use different approaches, have different cultural and geographic features, and represent a variety of partnership arrangements, there are a number of common themes evident across the case studies that we should learn from.

- Each of the programs demonstrates the importance of addressing violence against women and girls in a multi-disciplinary way through coordinating efforts between law enforcement agencies and the health, education and social sectors. They highlight the value of working in an integrated manner, using a victim-centred approach to service provision. This marks an important move away from the more traditional siloed approach that frequently characterises responses to violence against women and girls.
- Through these case studies we can see the value of addressing the needs of women and girls who are victims of violence by creating safe spaces that humanise their experiences. Although most victims of domestic violence are women, the programs additionally support a range of other vulnerable (and often invisible) groups who are affected by domestic violence, including the elderly, people with disabilities, people living in rural and remote areas, and in some cases, men.
- The case study programs demonstrate that while traditional policing models that adopt a 'command and control' approach can be part of the response to gender-based violence, there needs to be more flexibility, agility and adaptability in policing responses to address domestic violence in a way that provides appropriate support to

communities in line with community needs. Police agencies can benefit from moving away from these 'command and control' strategies toward a model that involves communities in joint problem solving around how to respond to gender-based violence. This change in strategic approach benefits both the police and the community.

- It is possible to ensure that public services are accessible to a range of people who experience domestic violence, but this requires decisive leadership that looks beyond government departments and ministries to involve other stakeholders. Formal collaborations with partner organisations outside of government agencies may bring new and innovative ideas for addressing violence against women and girls in a more effective and efficient manner.
- Public awareness raising campaigns, such as the Broken Wings campaign in Romania, can increase the visibility of domestic violence and prioritise the prevention of violence against women and girls on national and public policy agendas, even in countries where there has historically little attention to these issues.
- Good communication is critical for establishing and enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration. Successful partnerships entail mutual trust, respectful leadership and a dynamic network of stakeholder groups. Learning from each other – within and between organisations – is also hugely beneficial for strengthening cross-sectoral relationships between police, health and social services.
- Programs that convey the harmful impacts of domestic violence on women and vulnerable groups, including its social and emotional consequences, can lead to meaningful behavioural and attitudinal shifts among police officers, even where this may not be the primary objective of the program.
- Cross-sectoral partnerships can be difficult to set up and formalise as there may be some hesitancy from the government agencies in the initial stages of establishing a partnership. Yet project partners were often surprised by the openness and willingness of police agencies to change and adapt the way they respond to domestic violence.

COMMON PROGRAM CHALLENGES

There are also a number of common challenges experienced by the programs which we can draw lessons from:

- Preventing and appropriately responding to violence against women requires multi-sectoral collaboration. However, not all sectors are equally invested in collaborative programs that bring together the health and law enforcement sectors.
- Government agencies – and in particular the police – typically do not consult external stakeholder groups to ask for feedback on their operational policies and response. Close and effective collaboration often requires a high level of trust that is built over many years, which may not fit within program timelines. It is not always possible to ensure that programs are universally accessible, and consequently, programs may exclude some marginalised people such as those living outside of urban centres, minority populations, migrants and refugees.
- Confidentiality requirements to protect the identity of victims in cases involving violence against women and girls may hamper collaboration between government agencies and with external partners. This should be fully considered during the conceptualisation of a program and can be appropriately addressed through formal partnership agreements that outline information sharing arrangements.
- Adapting programs to suit local contexts may be challenging as there can be different operational environments (especially in cross-jurisdictional or cross-national projects), different cultural and political milieus, as well as geographical and urban/rural differences. There may also be differences in local police practices and procedures that influence the way these systems work. A single approach to designing and implementing a program may therefore not be appropriate to all settings. Understanding what may need to change in terms of a program's focus or activities requires listening to

how the police operate and working with the program's partners to collectively address these differences.

- Setting up programs can take a long time and frequently requires intense and sustained commitment to ensure that cross-sectoral partnerships come to fruition, especially to ensure there is sufficient resourcing. Yet project budgets do not always include funding for partnership-building activities.
- Policy, attitudinal and behavioural change as a result of program efforts can be slow and progress can be hard to measure.

CONCLUSION

Best practice approaches for addressing violence against women and girls incorporate both prevention and response initiatives. This report showcases four examples of innovative programs that work to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in different cultural settings. These programs draw on a range of partnership configurations and work to strengthen collaboration between law enforcement agencies, such as the police, and other sectors, particularly health and social services.

Collectively, these case studies demonstrate that cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder interventions can help to address violence against women and girls more effectively, highlighting the importance of moving away from siloed service provision to integrated service models. Importantly, collaborative programs that prevent and respond to domestic violence can help to reframe the public's common perception of the police as 'enforcers' of the law to one in which the police are instead viewed as sources of information and 'connectors' to health and social services for people who are victims of domestic violence.

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GLEPHA VIOLENCE PREVENTION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

If you are interested in finding out more about the topics explored in this report, please consider joining the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association's Violence Prevention Special Interest Group. The group seeks to provide an interdisciplinary space where professionals and academics across the globe can come together to discuss issues, exchange knowledge, and develop practice in the field of violence prevention.

By sharing and discussing best practice at the local, national, and international level, along with research at the forefront of the field, it is hoped that the goal of reducing violence within and across communities can be furthered. The Special Interest Group provides a regular forum which is open to GLEPHA members – and welcomes new members – to engage in discussion and knowledge exchange. The group consists of members with backgrounds as police officers, public health workers, sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, philosophers, among others.

To find out more about this Special Interest Group, please visit: <https://glepha.com/special-interest-groups/violence-prevention-sig/>

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