SJAF e-magazine

St Jeanne Antide Foundation

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Preventative workshops for *youths* held across Malta on *gender-based violence* and *violence in intimate relationships* – a joint initiative of SJAF and Men Against Violence

by Aleksandar Dimitrijevic, President, Men Against Violence

(this initiative forms part of a wider project led by the St Jeanne Antide Foundation titled ***A Package of Outreach Services for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing*** funded by the Voluntary Organisations Projects scheme (VOPs) managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector - MCVS - on behalf of the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties - MSDC)

If there is one thing that needs to be repeated every time we talk about elimination of domestic violence, intimate partner violence and violence against women is that it is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. The three Ps (Prevention, Protection & Prosecution) should be utilised to their absolute maximum for the effect to be felt and results achieved. In Europe and Malta (and more or less, rest of the world), much of the focus is on protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators and it is easy to see why. These two dimensions produce measurable results, in terms of how many protected and prosecuted; the system of law enforcement is already available and the success is easy to quantify.

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On the other hand, the effects and success rates of prevention programmes are not as easily measurable, since their success will be visible in the behaviour of future generations that would have benefited from the programmes. In many countries, prevention programmes are usually part and parcel of anti-bullying measures and do not tackle domestic violence and/or violence on women directly. The joint initiative of the St. Jeanne Antide Foundation and Men Against Violence is an attempt to rectify this lacunae and to tackle these issues head-on from a gender perspective.

The process of our joint initiative begun by examining what kind of prevention programmes have been embarked upon in other countries especially by other NGOs. We acquired teaching materials that have been tried, tested and proven to work in the USA, the United Kingdom and several EU countries. These programmes and lesson plans served as a good basis and as inspiration; they provided us with various tools, card games and videos to vary our workshops and adapt them accordingly.

The content of the workshop was developed by Elaine Compagno from the SOAR of the St Jeanne Antide Foundation and Alexander Dimitrievich from Men Against Violence. Both trainers took into account their previous experiences in classroom interventions on these topics in Maltese schools. The trainers set out from the beginning to create workshops that explain, in an innovative and entertaining way: (a) how gender inequality is perpetuated and reinforced throughout society through media and popular culture;(b) how this reality creates disparity in the balance of power between genders; (c) how this disparity leads to controlling and potentially violent relationships; and (d) how to recognise signs of controlling and abusive relationships and get out of them.

The trainers believe that, from the feedback obtained from students and teachers and from the high level of engagement of the majority of teenagers during the workshops, the initiative is largely successful. The questions and themes discussed are highly relevant to young persons' age and their interests.

The workshops are interactive and engaging. Ultimately, teens attending were given enough food for thought and enough knowledge for them to recognize signs of a bad relationship and how to deal with it. Hopefully, it will serve them well in the future and will help them avoid some of the potential pitfalls of their dating life.

From the perspective of Men Against Violence (MAV), the project is a great accomplishment. The core idea of MAV is that the fight for gender equality and violence frees society is something that men and boys can contribute to and play an important part in. Through this project, MAV was given an opportunity to work closely with SJAF to reach a large number of boys and to talk to them about what they can do to prevent violence. Even more important is the fact that both boys and girls have seen men talking about these issues, which are rare in our societies.

Lastly, MAV wishes to confirm that its commitment to a gender-equal and violence-free society has been reinforced by these training workshops for youth. MAV has, and will endeavour further, by using experience and tools that this project provided, to continue educating and advocating until it can say that the society we live in is free of violence.

Malta Council for the VOLUNTARY SECTOR

VOPS

MINISTERU GHAD-DJALOGU SOĊJALI, AFFARIJIET TAL-KONSUMATUR U LIBERTAJIET ĊIVILI

"This project is funded through the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme managed by the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties".

Helping Hands once again help SJAF

Helping Hands Magazine issue number 79 was in aid of SJAF. Magazine representative Mr Adrian Żammit presented a cheque for €6,000 to SJAF. The SJAF pages in issue 79 focused on various aspects of violence against women. Our heartfelt thanks to Helping Hands Magazine for supporting the Foundation.

Group of Italian NGO Professionals visiting Malta

KOPIN is an NGO working in the field of migration, international development cooperation and global education and is registered in Malta under the 2007 Voluntary Organisations Act (VO ID No - VO/0200).

KOPIN hosted a group of Italian NGO professionals who visited Malta between the 12th and 26th of February. During these two weeks, the group met a number of organisations and partners working in the refugee field, voluntary sector and social field, among others, in order to exchange views and good practices. KOPIN sent SJAF the following feedback from the Italian professionals who visited SJAF on the 23rd February 2017 to discuss the work of the Foundation.

"The group really enjoyed meeting practitioners from the St Jeanne Antide Foundation. They also appreciated the fact that SJAF took the time to read their profiles and to be flexible with the language. They got a very good impression of a small but incredibly committed team that implements quite a number of initiatives, some of them dealing with very delicate situations."

L-isfidi tad-diżabbiltà

minn Lynn, Voluntiera

Ġismi hu l-gaġġa tiegħi, hekk niddeskrivi d-diżabbiltà fiżika tiegħi. Diżabbiltà li ilha miegħi mit-twelid; allura sa ċertu punt drajt ngħix ħajti biha.

Qed ngħid drajt sa ċertu punt għax, għalkemm id-diżabiltà tiegħi hi dejjem l-istess, l-isfidi li toffrili jinbidlu skont iż-żmien u ċ-ċirkustanzi li nkun fihom. L-isfida tal-aċċessibbiltà dejjem hi ċentrali fil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum..

Qabel immur xi mkien, hi drawwa ġenerali tiegħi li niċċekkja jekk hux aċċessibbli l-post fejn inkun sejra. Għalkemm hawn Malta mxejna ħafna 'l quddiem f'dan is-settur, għad baqagħlna ħafna x'nimxu għax mhux l-ewwel darba li kelli ma mmurx xi mkien minħabba nuqqas ta' aċċessibbiltà.

Biss, l-aċċessibiltà hi sfida waħda mill-ħafna sfidi li jkolli nafaċċja fil-ħajja ta' kuljum. Biex ngħid hekk, l-isfida tal-aċċessibbiltà hi biss il-qoxra tal-isfidi l-oħrajn kollha. Hemm ħafna aktar sfidi li jinfdu sal-ġewwieni tiegħi u jolqtuni direttament fil-laħam il-ħaj.

L-ewwel sfida li nsib quddiemi hekk kif niftaħ għajnejja hi din: Kif ħa jkolli s-saħħa u l-enerġija nqum mis-sodda meta nkun se nqatta' jum ieħor id-dar? Għaliex is-soċjeta' ma tagħtinix iċ-ċans li naħdem bħal kulħadd? Għaliex dejjem insib l-ostaklu tad-dipendenza fuq ħaddieħor li dejjem iwaqqafni milli nagħmel dak li nixtieq?

Għalkemm l-isfidi tad-diżabbiltà huma kbar u ġieli jgħejjuni - għax huwa fatt li qatt ma nista' ngħix ħajja normali bħal kull żagħżugħa u żagħżugħ ieħor - tgħallimt napprezza ħafna aktar il-mirakli żgħar tal-ħajja. Vera li ma nistax noħroġ u nsiefer meta u kemm irrid imma għandi grazzja kbira li għandi familja u ħbieb li jagħmlu minn kollox għalija.

L-imħabba tagħhom tgħinni biex nibqa' miexja 'il quddiem minkejja li ma nistax negħleb kull sfida minħabba l-limitazzjonjiet li għandi. Fl-aħħar mill-aħħar nħossni kuntenta li jirnexxili negħleb l-akbar sfida - li naċċetta u ngħix kemm jista' jkun b'serenità d-diżabbilta' tiegħi.

Domestic violence - Finding out you're not alone.

SOAR One-to-one support sessions

SOAR provides a one-to-one support service for female survivors of domestic violence. The service sees an average of 3 to 4 new cases a month and provides on-going support online (using social media platforms, messaging and email) and offline through face-to-face meetings.

The women who come to SOAR for support are either referred to SOAR by other organisations, government agencies or practitioners, by friends or they come after hearing about it by word of mouth. SOAR is regularly visible in the media, through newspaper articles, TV interviews and Radio interviews. Its presence on social media is also strong, with many women in women's online groups now recognising that SOAR is a safe place a woman can turn to for support if she is a victim of domestic violence.

During the first meeting, the survivor will meet Elaine, the coordinator of the service. The meeting is confidential and will last around one hour. The survivor is invited to share her story or any concerns she has on her mind. The coordinator then explains what the service offers and how it can help her. Together, the survivor and the coordinator identify other needs that cannot be met by the SOAR service, but may be addressed by other services or practitioners, such as a social worker, councillor, therapist or lawyer. This is where sign-posting comes in. The coordinator will encourage and help the survivor to identify possible agencies, organisations or support services that the survivor can start to look into to address these other needs. Here, referrals can be made, but we prefer to encourage the survivor to find her sense of agency. This means that she will realise that she has taken her power back and can start to make important decisions in her life using her own will.

Throughout the session, the coordinator empathises with the survivor, validates her concerns and points out moments of strength that the survivor may not be seeing in herself. She reassures the survivor that she is not alone and that, should she wish to, she can join the SOAR support group run by survivors themselves. Through this group, the survivor will meet other women and make new friends who truly understand her.

Generally, a second follow up meeting is scheduled when there are ongoing proceedings in court or whenever the survivor feels the need to meet again. When a survivor needs regular ongoing support, she is generally referred to a counsellor, and invited to join the support group.

The one-to-one meetings often bring moments that a survivor never forgets. It could be the realisation that they are not "crazy" or "imagining it" (as they would have been told for years). It could be that they feel a sudden shedding of guilt when they are reaffirmed that the violence was never their fault. For some, putting a name or a label, or finding the language to describe all the manipulation and mind games is very relieving. For others who have been forced to feel shame, merely knowing that they are not alone

and knowing this happens to many other women, is all the reassurance they were looking for. The most common feedback we have received on the one-to-one support sessions is that for the first time in years, the survivor felt truly understood. This is what underpins the SOAR service – providing somewhere survivors can turn to for an inclusive healing experience of non-judgemental understanding and women's empowerment.

Testimonials

"Before I joined SOAR, I thought that I was alone in my problem and that not many others had passed through similar experiences to mine. When I joined the support group, I found constant support from the leaders and the members. I learned that there is more to life and, thanks to these women, today I see more than an empty road. I now see a future before me full of opportunity"

"I found support through SOAR when I needed it most, even when I wasn't sure whether to leave or not. Thanks to the meetings with the Coordinator, I felt empowered to take my own decisions, since the relationship taught me otherwise... I also felt very supported when I was about to testify in court and felt like SOAR had my back. SOAR helped me realise that, unfortunately, I am not alone in this and through the various well-organised events, I met a whole bunch of beautiful strong women who can relate to my experience unlike other friends and acquaintances who have not experienced the harm of toxic relationships. Furthermore I have always found help whenever I called and am forever grateful."

"SOAR has been an experience of personal growth and development. Through the sharing of my own experiences with women who have had similar experiences, I have started to look at myself and women in general as a gender, with higher regard and esteem. Thanks to SOAR's advocacy arm, I have participated in conferences, fora, seminars and group debates which have been positive opportunities for me to raise awareness on the realities of domestic violence. It has given me dignity to stand up and prove that beneath every victim is a woman with great potential and dignity that deserve to be respected."

SKOP Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni

E4C EDUCATING FOR CHANGE

This project is being financed through the project "*E4C – Educating for change: Capitalising on the EU Presidency in Malta to raise awareness on Agenda 2030*" implemented by SKOP – The National Platform of Maltese Development NGOs (VO/0366). For more information, please visit www.skopmalta.org.

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Violence Prevention Workshops for youth

Report on part of the project implemented by SOAR in collaboration with Men Against Violence

prepared by Elaine Compagno

Preparatory work

During the months between May 2016 and April 2017, SOAR and Men Against Violence (MAV) worked collaboratively to plan, prepare and deliver a number of workshops for violence prevention. This was done in three phases, taking place simultaneously:

The first phase consisted of familiarisation with a number of studies that examined various violence prevention programs and their outcomes. These were mostly academic papers, based on research done in UK, USA and elsewhere. Various programs and approaches were analysed for a) their effectiveness and b) usefulness to the task we needed to accomplish. It was clear from the literature analysis that the most effective violence prevention programmes were multifaceted, tackling gender inequality as the main source from where most of domestic and intimate partner violence originates.

SOAR and Men Against Violence also undertook research into local school policies and how the violence is tackled during PSCD lesson or otherwise. We also analysed research done by various local NGOs and government entities on prevention of violence in local settings. We found that most of the local violence prevention programmes fall under the prevention of bullying.

Professional resources and learning tools for violence prevention workshops that tackle violence from different and/or multiple sources were purchased from overseas. From UK, we acquired the Tender program that tackles issues of bullying and consent between teens. From the U.S.A., we attained the Mentors in Violence Prevention program, which revolves around the bystander approach, ie. what to do when and if one observes a violent event happening. Finally, we obtained Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence (GEAR against IPV), a set of four books, tried and tested in a number of countries, tackling violence in school from the Gender Equality perspective. All these were used as an inspiration and backbone for creating different types of age-appropriate workshops, with adaptation to the local scenario.

Some workshops were tailor-made for different groups that fell outside of the secondary-school age category, such as training for the police cadets, teachers and support-line volunteers.

Marketing the Violence Prevention Workshops for young persons

Summer months: During the summer months, a number of schools and learning institutions had been contacted and a letter was sent to them, according to our marketing strategy, to secure workshops for the 2016/2017 scholastic year. We attempted to engage youth groups in the scheduling of workshops for the summer months, but many were unresponsive. A meeting was held with the Guidance department for Church schools, however, nothing solid transpired from this meeting. Eventually we focused on pursuing mostly State Schools as they seemed more accessible and responsive.

Scholastic year months: During scholastic months we were met with various challenges. Perhaps the most significant one was the limited time that schools could grant us during particular months. October, December, January and February were the most difficult months due to unsettled school routines at the start of the year, exam season, preparations for school plays for prize day, and the holidays for Christmas, Carnival and Easter. Schools were also more receptive during the scholastic months in comparison with the summer months and communication with teachers was easier. We found PSCD teachers to be very helpful and eager to assist with the logistical planning required for each workshop.

Other requests: Periodically, we would receive requests to give presentations to groups. These requests would entail a tailor-made, age-appropriate presentation for each group. The groups mainly consisted of young people in tertiary or post-secondary education, teachers and support workers. The same messages underpinned each workshop or presentation: 1) the link between gender inequality and gender-based violence; 2) building self-awareness on recognising unhealthy relationship traits; 3) and the process of getting out of a violent relationship.

School-based Workshop Facilitation

Since May 2016, a number of workshops were facilitated for young people in different settings, offering age appropriate and tailor-made workshops for each group. A number of teachers were offered training on the same topic for a multiplier effect and resources that are easily and freely accessed online were shared with the PSCD teachers to be used in follow up lessons.

Each group of students participated in 2 workshops:

Part 1 was focused on identifying gender stereotypes and becoming aware of how they restricted all people, some more than others. The workshop then challenged the participants to rethink their prejudices and preconceived notions of gender roles and abilities. Videos were used to engage students in discussion on these themes. From the discussion, the facilitators assisted students to see power imbalances that were directly and indirectly caused and affected by rigid gender expectations.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students recognise stereotypical gender roles and the limitations such roles have on different genders;
2. Students recognise the learned social constructs of gender (boys are tough, girls are weak);
3. Students recognise the double standards related to gender and learn to challenge them;
4. Students recognise the unequal power that comes about because of these social constructs and gender expectations (women expected to become mothers and housewives and have no earning power, men expected to work outside the home and have earning power);
5. Students see that anyone can do and be whatever they want no matter what gender.

In Part 2 this link is investigated further with the use of a game about power or a video on music-lyrics analysis. A discussion follows the video on objectification and power. The facilitator then moves on to what an abusive intimate relationship could look like and feel like, using a table with the different forms of violence in relationships (physical, psychological, sexual etc). Themes discussed include jealousy, economical abuse, and coercion. The workshops end with a video (source: WellCast) on how to leave an abusive relationship and information on where to access support in Malta.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students understand what having power and what not having any power feels like (game);
2. Students understand what a bystander can do to be proactive;
3. Students gain the skill to critically analyse lyrics in the music they often hear and the images they see for messages of gender-based violence, objectification and sexualisation;
4. Students recognise different forms of violence in intimate relationships, particularly economic abuse, isolation and coercion;
5. Students gain a healthy understanding of what jealousy is and how to deal with it;
6. Students gain the skill to recognise an unhealthy relationship and the skill to know how to exit such a relationship.

Settings for Workshop deliver	**Persons reached**
Secondary School-based workshops	Reached **1,457** young people
Higher Education based workshops	Reached **242** young people
Youth group based workshops	Reached **76** young people
Training to other women's groups	Reached **134** women
Training for youth volunteers, support services and	Reached **89** people
Total persons reached	**1,998**

OUTCOMES

Output target (as they appear in grant proposal) regarding the SOAR-MAV dimension of	**Actual outcomes achieved (data summarised above)**	**Notes**
- running an estimated 80 workshops and non-formal learning activities for approximately 2,000 school students. (Peripatetic Outreach)	68 workshops and non-formal learning activities held for 1,457 secondary school students.	We also held 4 workshops at higher education level and reached 242 young people through this effort.
- delivering 20 workshops and non-formal learning activities for around 300 youths in youth groups on the relevant issues surrounding dating and domestic violence (Detached Outreach)	5 workshops and non-formal learning activities held for 76 young people.	We also held 4 informal workshops for women's groups and reached 134 young women.
- creating awareness raising posters for display on school notice boards	Awareness raising posters were created and disseminated to the schools that were visited.	
- creating and displaying posters and disseminating printed information on how teens may access support related to dating or domestic violence. (Peripatetic Outreach)	Leaflets with contact information for further support were disseminated among participants.	

Identifying resources created by other organisations overseas on violence in intimate relationships for procurement and use locally during workshops for youths. (for peripatetic outreach use)	Resources were identified and procured: Tender Programme (UK) Mentors in Violence Prevention program (USA) Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence	
Creating and disseminating complimentary resources for PSCD teachers and school counsellors on dating and domestic violence. A structured outreach programme, in collaboration with NGO Men Against Violence, could potentially reach 2,000 teens across schools and youth groups in Malta and Gozo in the span of one scholastic year. With the proper resources, this new outreach programme could have a **multiplier effect**, enabling teachers and youth workers to continue the discussion and answer questions in subsequent school PSCD lessons or youth group activities.	Links to online complimentary resources were shared with all PSCD teachers from each school. One resource found at http://www.antiviolence-net.eu/projects_GEAR_EN.htm offers teaching guides, lesson plans and game ideas. The Gear against IPV resource is the result of a project between four countries, Germany, Croatia, Austria and Greece that was funded by the Daphne III EU fund programme. It is a highly useful free online resource that PSCD teachers will surely find useful when tackling topics on gender equality awareness and intimate partner violence. Another resource we shared is the online video available from YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwNr0eQmmuI&t=5s	We also held 3 training workshops for teachers and support-line volunteers reaching for a multiplier effect, reaching 89 individuals.

Feedback by participating organisations:

"You cannot imagine how pleased and honoured I am for having had you on board and work together on this training venture.

Thank you for having helped us achieve our objectives. Mostly, thank you for your preparation, planning and delivering a very interesting presentation. I received very positive feedback from the students on your session." Insp. Edward Zammit – Presentation to Academy for Disciplined Forces.

"The sessions held at our school during Personal, Social and Career Development lessons were very interesting and the students were engaged during the whole session. Students participated in discussions and activities while interesting observations and points where raised by the students themselves. The facilitators managed to get the students' attention and interest by providing appropriate material and resources. Both students' and teachers' feedback regarding the sessions were very encouraging and positive." Mario Cucciardi – Head of Dept. (PSCD), St Ignatius College, Handaq.

"It is an eye opener to students, they understand better that abuse is not just physical but can take different forms... and what struck me most is having some students who have gone or are passing through dv themselves."

Prevention work is one aspect of the SOAR service. Four other key dimensions are (1) Advocacy; (2) Support to women; (3) Publications & research, (4) Representing SJAF in key DV fora. What follows is a report on the work carried out by SOAR in collaboration with Men Against Violence to run violence prevention workshop for youths. Contact email and facebook and mobile office hours.

Malta Council for the VOLUNTARY SECTOR VOPS

"This project is funded through the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme managed by the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties".

The LWIEN Service in 2016 - some statistics

by Connie Magro, Senior Practitioner (Psychiatric Nurse)

LWIEN aims to provide a lifeline to family members who feel overwhelmed and stressed out by the daily pressure and mental anguish of constantly caring for a family member suffering from a chronic mental illness.

Family Caregivers are at risk of developing mental health problems themselves. The daily struggle to grapple with the challenge of caring for a loved one with mental illness is gruelling and exhausting and often leads to high anxiety and distress. Care-giving relatives often end up depressed. Their relationships suffer. Their morale at work and their employment are threatened.

Family caregivers of mentally ill persons lack support since service providers mostly focus on the needs of the sufferer. LWIEN tries to redress this situation by providing the following support to alleviate distress.

New family cases '16	Individuals:	Males	Females
125	222	72	150
Cases closed in 2016:	81		
Cases brought forward from 2015: 50 families involving 71 individuals.			
Sessions held with families 2016:	1404		
Types of mental illnesses suffered by family members cared for by new families reached in 2016 (new cases only)			
Depression	59		
Bi-polar disorder	6		
Schizophrenia	22		
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	20		
Paranoia	6		
Personality disorders	17	Of which, Borderline PD=8; Schizoid PD=1; Dependent PD=3; Narcissim=11; Sociopathy=1)	
Addictions	14		
Anxiety & panic attacks	12		
Defiant behaviour	1		
Dementia	5		
Munchhausen by proxy	1		
Severe intellectual disability	7	Of which: autism=4; AD(H)D=2; Dyslexia=1	
Anxiety & panic attacks	20	Of which, 8 were victims of domestic violence	
Grief due to suicide of family member	6		
Referred for psychiatric evaluation	8		
	204	in 125 families	
Summary 2016:	**Individuals**	**Families**	
Brought forward from 2016	71	50	
2016 new cases	222	125	
Total	**293**	**175**	

On Saturday 25th March, SJAF organized its second fundraising concert

A Tribute to Music Legends.

All the 11 singers accompanied by the Spiteri Lucas Band gave a live performance of hits of unforgettable music legends like Tom Jones, Adele, Queen, Elvis, Beatles and many others. The event was compered by Ms Mireille Bonello.

SJAF would like to take this opportunity to thank all the performers and sponsors without whose support this event would not have been possible.

A huge THANK YOU! goes to all those who attended and made this concert another successful event and to all the SJAF workers and volunteers who worked very hard to ensure a successful income-generating event for the Foundation.

Auction for Action - 7th May 2017

Another fundraising event was held on Sunday 7th May at Swieqi Local Council premises and surrounding garden. Food stalls, handicrafts, a children's play area, plants and flowers stands were amongst the stalls which set up for this occasion. Another attraction was the display of Old Motor Cars.

The main event was the Auction which had more then 70 mystery boxes as lots to bid for. Special thanks goes to the Swieqi Local Council for the incredible support they extended to SJAF before, during and after the event.

Thanks are also due to all the sponsors, to Auctioneer Kenneth Vassallo who so ably led the auction with humour, to all the volunteers who gave a helping hand and all those who attended and made this event a successful one.

Maternal alienation - A mother's worst nightmare

Written by Maria*, a SOAR member and activist within the SOAR Maternal Alienation sub-group. *Name has been changed.

The term ' Maternal Alienation ' was coined by Australian researcher Anne Marris. The term refers to the alienation of children from their mother within the context of Domestic Violence. Manipultion, brainwashing and constant character assassination of the mother are tactics consciously resorted to by the father to separate the child from the mother.

My children were always my greatest treasure. I always thought the worst thing that could happen to a mother was to lose one of her children through death. Little did I know that I myself would one day grieve a son who is still alive.

I endured years of emotional and verbal abuse till one day I decided that I could no longer endure this behaviour that pounded my should to powder. My children were growing in an unhealthy home environment which was causing them much stress and pain. I decided to start marriage separation proceedings. It was this point that my husband started to systematically brainwash and manipulate our children to hit back at me for daring to leave him. He started to manipulate my eldest with whom I had a very special bond. My son started to change. Gradually, he turned against me.

The situation at home had by then become unbearable. My two younger children urged me to leave as they could not take it any longer. I had no option but to leave the matrimonial home leaving my eldest behind as he did not want to come with us. My eldest son's last words before we left home were those that his father had drummed into his mind. Even then, his true self burst out and he asked me whether I still loved him. I told him that I did with all my heart, forever. That was the last time my son spoke to me. Eventually, he started using the same heart-numbing abusive language his father always addressed me with.

From then on my son refused all contact with me. I tried and still try to send messages; they remain unanswered. Gifts for special occasions are refused and returned. Eventually, I was told to refrain from sending any more. My son is constantly used to hurt me. Especially in court, where he has been a witness against me on several occasions, there was one time where he accused me of trying to physically harm and threaten him. This was the worst ever day of my life. It very traumatic for me to hear my own son speak about me in such an untruthful and resentful manner when he practically accuses me of being a monster. There are days when I cannot take my son's rejection and hatred. However, deep inside of me, I still believe in the boy I raised with so much love.

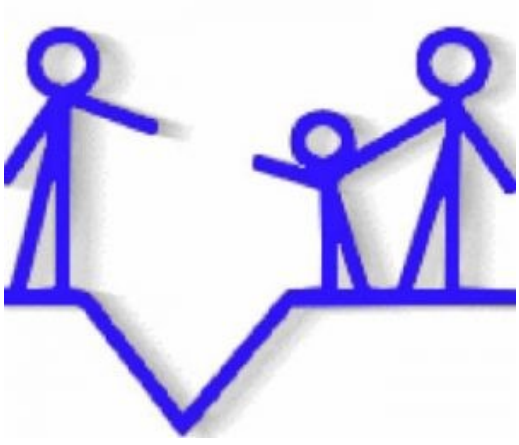
My husband tried hard too to turn my youngest against me by constantly badmouthing me. For several years, I endured the effects of lies of physical abuse and neglect of my children. But my determination and strong belief in the truth paid off. I was cleared of all these allegations and, after struggling endlessly to prove my husband was harming my youngest emotionally, I was finally proven right and measures were taken to secure my son's safety from psychological harm.

No child should ever have to endure all this. Children should be loved, cherished, nurtured and protected and not used and abused just to spite the other parent. I am doing my best to instill the values of love and respect in my children. I strongly believe that the values we are nurtured to believe in and practice, build up our character and give us a strength no one can take away. In the early days, I had promised myself that I would not end up with a broken marriage and separation, that I would never become bitter or let hatred be my driver. Despite everything, today I can honestly say I was true to my word. I am angry and very hurt, but all along in my now 8 year separation, I have fought my husband with nothing except the truth. It wasn't the easy way but the best. It has been a long road but gradually things are getting better. Along the way I have become stronger and wiser. My daughter, who was strong enough to stand up to her father, was totally rejected by him; he has never tried to contact her or reach out to her.

I long for my eldest to be reunited with us all. He has been completely isolated from all those who love him and long to hug him. I especially yearn to hear him call my name, especially on special occasions when I miss him even more.

When asked to describe how I feel I about my situation, I always reply that it feels as if part of my body is missing, that it has been wrenched away. Even if I really long to have my son back, my greatest wish is that one day he will be strong enough to set himself free from his father's control. Inside my heart I do believe my son is not happy and that is what hurts me the most. I will never give up on him; he is part of me and I can never rest till I know he is happy and free.

I beg young women to open their eyes and never accept a relationship where abuse is present. If your partner shows signs of being extremely jealous, possessive and controlling, or that with every argument he blows into a rage, do not accept it. These traits can only change for the worse. Love yourself enough to never accept being disrespected. I would never wish on anyone the high price I had to pay for believing my husband would one day change for the better. Seek help if you think you are in an abusive relationship as the consequences of staying are too much to endure and live with. Love should never hurt. Each and every one of us deserves to be cherished and loved.



Paġna Poeżija

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DONATIONS

Your donation is truly appreciated. It enables us to sustain our services to vulnerable and poor individuals and families.
Donation to the St Jeanne Antide Foundation can be made as follows:

Cheque issued to The St Jeanne Antide Foundation and posted to the Foundation: 51 Tarxien Road, Tarxien TXN 1092

For **local bank transfers**: **APS** 2000 0681 886 **HSBC** 013175021001
BOV 4002003379-0 **BANIF** 00210404101

If you are a Go/Vodafone/Redtouch subscriber you can donate by sending a **blank SMS** (SMS tariffs applicable):
€2.33 – 50617371 €4.66 – 50618095
€6.99 – 50618909 €11.65 - 50619217
You will receive a text message of thanks and acknowledgement

For **bank transfers from overseas**: APS Bank, 146/147, Antoine De Paul Square, Paola PLA1260
Bank Code (Swift) APSBMTMT IBAN No: MT03 APSB 7708 0005 5047 2000 0681 886 (last 11 digits are the account number).

HOW YOU CAN HELP US - OTHER OPTIONS

- If you are getting married: make a donation instead of buying wedding souvenirs.
- If you are having a birthday party: ask friends to make a donation instead of buying a gift.
- If you are having a wedding anniversary celebration: convince your guests to make a donation instead of buying a gift.
- For funerals: you may wish to make a donation instead of buying flowers.
- Get Together: organise a spontaneous collection.
- You may wish to send us a monthly or annual donation, whatever the amount.
- You can encourage others to consider donating to the Foundation.
- Ask your employer for a matching scheme which will make your contribution go even further!

Become a HELP-SJAF Champion and ask friends and family to make a donation.

CONTACT US: sjafngo@gmail.com

Foundation SERVICES

1. Family Resource Centres:
- Ċentru Antida Family Resource Centre, 51, Tarxien Road, Tarxien. Open from 7.30am to 5 pm daily in winter time (sometimes later as well).; up to 1pm in summer Serves localities of Tarxien, Paola, Fgura and Santa Lucia. Social Work, community outreach, advocacy, referral, information, emotional support, support groups.

Volunteering opportunities, included inclusive volunteering for service users.

Volunteer Handymen in support of vulnerable and poor families.

Learning Support for vulnerable persons supported by Foundation Social Workers. Includes: *For Children*: weekly learning support for primary level students; *For adults*: non-formal learning opportunities such as self-esteem groups & literacy.

Volunteer Befriending for lonely, home-bound elderly persons **Counselling**;

Bazaar in Tarxien (recycling and fundraising).

- Ċentru Enrichetta Family Resource Centre, Triq San Tumas, Birżebbuġa**.** Open Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8am to 2pm. Social Work service; Family Literacy Support Programme; MCCF service on Tuesdays from 8am to 11am. Tel No. 21652038—99960381.

2. LWIEN Service – support for family carergivers of persons with mental health problems. Includes family consultations, counselling, support groups, home-visits, social work.

3. IRENE Service in support of very vulnerable women involved in street prostitution. Dar Hosea drop-in centre. Tel no. 99508954.

4. SOAR Service: advocacy and support for victims and survivors of domestic violence . Includes workshops on dating and domestic violence for young persons. Tel No. 99927872 from 9:30am to 5pm.
Email: soarmalta@gmail.com.

5. Emotional Freedom Service for persons wanting to be free from their anger, fear or other emotional distress.

6. Overseas Development Projects: SJAF works with partners in developing countries to formulate anti-poverty projects. It has also arranged for public funding of such projects in Pakistan, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Malawi.

7. Centering Prayer Group for contemplative prayer practice.

PUBLICATIONS: ask us for list or visit our website ***www.antidemalta.org***

See "Services" & "Reports" on www.antidemalta.org