

Prevention and comprehensive reparation of gender-based violence: a paradigm focused on the rights and needs of women, children and adolescents

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Illustrator: [Eduardo Luzzatti](#)

The amendments introduced by Law 17/2020, dated 22 December, to Law 5/2008, dated 22 November, concerning the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence, have not only broadened the forms and areas acknowledged, but have also allowed us to develop a new paradigm of intervention. New perspectives of the analysis and understanding of gender-based violence have thus been incorporated, such as intersectionality, which refers to reciprocal constitution among categories that produce inequalities (such as origin, skin colour, phenotype, ethnicity, religion, administrative situation, age, social class, economic precariousness, functional or mental disability, addictions, HIV status, deprivation of liberty and sexual and gender diversity). These should all be taken into account when intervening in the face of gender-based violence.

Also acknowledged as such are forms of violence that had previously been covered up, such

as obstructive, digital, vicarious and second-order violence, as well as new areas in which acknowledged forms of violence may manifest themselves, such as the digital, political, institutional and educational spheres. Furthermore, concepts that bring about changes in interventions and public policies have been introduced, such as the acknowledgement of femicide, which also includes suicide inducement and suicide itself as a consequence of pressure and violence against women (art. 5.4.g), as well as the concept of sexual consent (art.3.h).

When intervening on gender-based violence situations, we need to take into account the intersectional point of view: there are several categories that produce inequalities

In this new paradigm proposed by the Protocol for Intervention with Due Diligence in Situations of Gender-Based Violence, published by the Government of Catalonia, approved in 2022 by the National Commission on Gender-Based Violence [1], the whole approach should focus on the needs and rights of women, children and adolescents in situations of gender-based violence, acknowledging them as right-holders and promoting their capacity to act and their autonomy. Furthermore, all intervention should be designed and implemented with the participation of women, children and adolescents.

Organising intervention from a circular logic: prevention and comprehensive reparation

Gender-based violence requires interdisciplinary intervention at different levels. The literature has often focused specifically on attention to women victims, and although this is essential, it is insufficient, as we should never lose sight of the fact that we are not dealing with an individual and specific problem, but rather a structural and community problem [2], hence it should be linked to the framework of public policies for equality and cover both preventive and social aspects

Circular thinking or spiral thinking argues that the linear thinking model makes it difficult to understand the processes of human behaviour and its cultural creation, whereas spiral thinking implies approaching the complexity of the world with no need to divide it up into different sections [3]. In this regard, a methodology constructed in a circular way can help us grasp structural and systemic relationships, and to resolve the tension generated between theory and practice by placing both on the same plane of interaction. The tension between action and reflection is also resolved from the same perspective, as action and reflection are situated in the same quadrant, forming part of a whole [4].

This logic is the one that best explains the intervention carried out by the specialised intervention network in situations of gender-based violence, and it is therefore the one that lies behind the Framework Protocol for Intervention in Situations of Gender-Based Violence

with Due Diligence [5]. This instrument proposes two fundamental axes of intervention – prevention and comprehensive reparation – in contrast to the previous model, which defined four (prevention, detection, care and recovery). These aspects should not be interpreted in a sequential or independent manner, but rather in a circular way, with ongoing feedback and interaction. Thus, for example, when we work on reparation, we not only have to think about the individual recovery of the people affected, but we also need strategies to make sure that what is happening to that woman, child or adolescent does not happen again. This already places us in the construction of guarantees of non-repetition and in the axis of prevention.

Moreover, when we work on individual recovery, strategies are put in place so that the situation of women, children and adolescents does not become chronic, does not worsen and does not increase the risks. This focus on intervention places us increasingly in the field of individual reparation and prevention. Finally, when planning prevention and awareness-raising policies and actions aimed at generating cultural, social and institutional changes (structural prevention), they should be based on the incidents and problems identified in specific situations. All of this in turn has a restorative effect for all women, children and adolescents who are living with or coming out of gender-based violence, which is again intertwined with reparation.

Spiral thinking implies approaching the complexity of the world with no need to divide it up into different sections

In this regard, the most appropriate strategies are determined by the purpose of the intervention. Two main aims are thus established for each axis of intervention. Prevention has a structural purpose, as well as an individual purpose, while the purpose of reparation is recovery and guaranteeing non-repetition.



Source: Framework Protocol for Intervention in Situations of Gender-Based Violence with Due Diligence. Barcelona, 2022

Prevention: feedback between the specific case and structural prevention

The term 'prevention' refers to the "series of actions aimed at avoiding or reducing the incidence of the problem of gender-based violence by reducing the risk factors, thus preventing its standardisation, and actions aimed at raising the awareness among citizens that no form or manifestation of violence is justifiable or tolerable" (art. 3.c of Law 5/2008).

Awareness-raising works to ensure that gender-based violence is made visible in all the forms and spheres in which it occurs, that the structural causes are socially understood and that this understanding will generate new individual and collective positions in the face of specific situations of gender-based violence. Awareness-raising should have an impact on cultural beliefs, collective imaginaries and symbolic and social representations [6]. And yet, in addition to awareness-raising, there are other important prevention tools:

- The dissemination and promotion of rights is essential to building up a model in which women, children, and adolescents are central, as their awareness of their rights, their access to them and the mechanisms to make them effective should be guaranteed at all levels.
- Research is a key tool in prevention, insofar as it allows us to be aware or deepen our knowledge of the different forms and areas of gender-based violence, the structural causes and the effective mechanisms for its eradication.

- Coeducation, in particular sexual and emotional education, with an intersectional feminist approach, the promotion of anti-sexist and egalitarian masculinities, specialised training and community action, are other fundamental tools for prevention [\[7\]](#).

Comprehensive reparation: from recovery to structural transformation

As for comprehensive reparation, it should be borne in mind that it begins with the actual detection. It is made up of the series of legal, economic, social, labour, health, educational and similar measures adopted by the various bodies and agents responsible for intervention in the area of gender-based violence, which aim to guarantee acknowledged rights and to restore all the damaged areas, without revictimisation and guaranteeing non-repetition.

Comprehensive reparation is guided by the model of the central position of women, children and adolescents, and implies the need to identify all the areas and rights affected by gender-based violence. Sometimes it is not only a question of returning to the state prior to the violence – which is a minimum goal, the starting point of reparation – because the previous situation may also be an intersection of social violations, but rather to comprehensively guarantee the rights of people in situations of gender-based violence and to promote the personal, social, community and institutional transformation necessary to ensure that gender-based violence does not happen again [8].

In this regard, we should point out that reparation has a structural framework that ranges from specific victim areas (health, such as sexual and reproductive health recovery services; finance, such as monetary compensation; labour, such as access to work spaces) to the community and institutional spheres (such as administrative and judicial reparation systems) [9].

Detection is carried out through the implementation of theoretical and technical instruments to identify and make gender-based violence visible, whether it occurs sporadically or on a regular basis, and to identify the situations in which intervention is required in order to prevent it actually taking place and becoming chronic (art. 3.d of Law 5/2008).

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It is important to emphasise that this is not an initial or fixed phase of the intervention, but

rather a joint and ongoing practice between professionals and women, children, and adolescents, necessary for the guarantee of rights, and which requires a comprehensive view of the forms and areas of gender-based violence. People who work in direct care know that, although women, children and adolescents talk about certain forms of gender-based violence in specific areas, other more invisible, concealed and standardised forms may be taking place, may have occurred in the past or may even be activated by the process of recovery itself. It is essential to address all of them during the intervention. Detection should therefore remain active throughout the entire recovery process, because it allows us to organise support and priorities, assess current risks, respond to new needs and guarantee violated or threatened rights. All this is what we know as the monitoring and updating of detection.

The importance of networking

Another aspect of reparation is professional, interdisciplinary and specialised support. This means the series of actions aimed at helping a person to overcome the situations and consequences generated by gender-based violence in the personal, family, work and social spheres, guaranteeing them safety and providing them with the necessary information on resources and procedures (art. 3.e of Law 5/2008).

This accompaniment, like all intervention, should be carried out from a feminist and intersectional approach, providing active accompaniment for women, adolescents and children. It should facilitate the identification of their needs and inform them in a clear and comprehensible way about their rights, services and resources, especially those related to emergencies and protection, but also reference rights for taking care of future consultations, doubts and new needs [10]. This right of women to receive specialised care, advice and support needs to be guaranteed with due diligence, which means, in addition to what has already been mentioned, guaranteeing coordination and networking.

In this regard, we believe that we should promote and consolidate a culture of networking, which is essential to make the aforementioned Protocol effective in order to effectively intervene in situations of gender-based violence, and also in general to any public policy that aims to build guarantees of non-revictimisation for women, children and adolescents in their journeys towards information, support, treatment, protection, justice, or comprehensive reparation and the guarantee of their rights.

Networking improves the quality of public service responses to situations of gender-based violence, avoids ineffective duplication, enables diversity to be brought together and makes it possible to work in common directions and for shared goals. As Barudy points out [11], the network makes it possible to “share the burden” among different points (whether professionals and/or services) in order to protect, provide and support each other. It is a question of breaking away from the models of intervention conceived as the sum of isolated packages in order to build a global model together, making intervention more effective from each of the areas involved and from the point of view of the whole. All the related services form part of a network and it is not possible to think of professional intervention

outside this [12].

However, it is possible to choose how this network is used [13]. It is possible to opt for a referral model, in which each service carries out its own function and in which the people attended move through the network (even though sometimes they are left adrift).

Alternatively, there could be a culture of networking, in which the network is organised on the basis of the central place taken by the person who is the subject of the intervention. The link among professionals is thus sustained over time, in a work plan that allows for the distribution of requests and proposals among different services and people, as well as a joint construction of the case [14].

It should be understood that working in a network involves something more than what is usually understood by coordination, and that it goes far beyond the fact of having good referral procedures. Networking thus requires a prior agreement between the players involved on the need to choose this model and their commitment to adopting an ethical stance when faced with difficulties, opting to tackle rather than ignore or deny them. Bearing in mind that the magnitude of the problem we are dealing with, and the personal implications it entails, can be paralysing or provoke impulsive actions in professionals, the network becomes the ideal space and medium in which to express these difficulties and seek shared alternatives

Working in a network thus implies for professionals the acceptance of a new shared knowledge and the abandonment of the position of powerlessness or ignorance that, at times, could be more comfortable [15]. It may seem more complex, or that we are talking about spaces for which there is not enough time, but in fact, in highly complex situations such as those of gender-based violence, establishing an analysis and a work plan from the culture of networking turns out to be an excellent investment.

Networking improves the quality of public service responses to gender-based violence

Being professionally and institutionally aware of the new paradigm of intervention proposed by the Protocol leads us to intervene with due diligence, understanding that each intervention is not a one-off event, but is ultimately aimed at achieving comprehensive reparation and the prevention of gender-based violence.

REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES

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