

## **Consequences of intimate partner violence on children – research from Serbia**

In 2013, the Autonomous Women's Center conducted a qualitative study among 170 women from 12 towns/municipalities in Serbia, to assess the impact of intimate partner violence on children (Ignjatovic 2013). The sample included women survivors of intimate partner violence who are mothers of at least one minor child and have addressed women's organizations for support. The study revealed, among others:

In more than two thirds of the cases, the children witnessed violence committed by their father against their mother; in almost half of the cases, children experienced violence themselves.

In more than 40% of the cases, children tried to protect the mother from violence or prevent the father from acting violent, which put them at major risk of harm.

Mothers report the existence of physical injuries to children, sleep disturbances and loss of appetite (in every fourth case, respectively), as well as night urination in every fifth case.

The following changes in behaviour were reported: children being quiet and withdrawn (50%), restless, disobedient or irritable and prone to shouting (every third case), or showing physical and verbal aggression (every fourth child).

Most commonly reported reactions of children to their violent fathers included fear, avoidance of any contact or unconditional obedience. It was observed that obedience decreased over time, as a result of age and increasing independence. In some cases, however, children insisted on contacts with the father, due to authentic emotions for him but also as a result of manipulative behaviours on the part of the perpetrator.