

Overview of different programs in Finland and their approaches

What has been domestic violence?

Domestic violence has been a recognized problem in Finland for centuries, but what was recognized as domestic violence has varied widely. The changes in these views and the attitudes have been driven by both legislation and societal changes.

In the Kristofers landslag (The Country Law of Christopher) from 1442 the killing of spouses and children was deemed unlawful. The first changes after this arrived during the 17th century with Swedish religiously driven legislative changes that made punishments for crimes draconian and made violence against parents as well as infanticide punishable by death.

These changes were rolled back during the 18th century and the next changes came during the 19th century. In Finland, the work on domestic violence began as part of 19th century prohibition movement NGO work. The discussion on what was abuse began as prohibition movement linked alcoholism to physical violence, psychological abuse and economic deprivation in the families.

During the 20th century the forms of domestic abuse became more diverse. The main progress was towards less and less forms of abuse being allowed in the families. These changes can be seen as part of the discussions on the rights of women and children. Whereas Finland has been progressive on the rights of women and children in other areas like political participation and worker’s rights, all the legislative changes on domestic violence have happened rather late and only after there have been numerous examples to follow from other European countries, especially from other Nordic countries.

Whereas physical disciplining of children was lawful requirement for parent in the legislation in the 19th century, in 20th century it was first dropped from legislation and later made illegal in 1984.

The work to reduce violence in domestic settings – especially against women – was in the 1970s and after public debate the national awareness campaigns began. These campaigns began ten years later than in for example Sweden or United States. Finnish legislation lagged behind even more and physical violence in domestic settings was made indictable offence and no longer a private matter in 1995.

In the year 1994 non-consensual sex within marriage was included in the rape legislation and in 1998 the legislation was changed so that men could also be the victims. Law of restraining order was modified to contain members of the same family in 2004.

As latest modifications of legislation in Finland have been ratification of the Istanbul convention in 2011 and making stalking illegal in 2014.

With all these changes the bar for what is deemed violence and what a private matter has gone from killing spouses to containing various forms of violence including physical, psychological, economic, religious and sexual abuse. As always with great societal changes, not everyone in Finland shares the same values and attitudes. The change in attitudes has been faster in cities and slower in rural areas. The change has been slow and steady, without great breakthroughs. For example, the rate of spousal homicide has only been halved with 40 years of work.

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As the forms of violence have become more diverse, so has the need for help in different forms become necessary. Some of the need is based on legislation, some on what the society as a whole deems worthy of attention.

The forms work against domestic violence has taken in Finnish society has been largely dictated by different financial forms this help has taken. Because of the basis of the overview of different models used in Finland can best understood by discussing the financial models they have behind them.

Financial models used in work against domestic violence

Different organizations that work in the field of domestic violence in Finland have eight partially overlapping basic financial models in use. These models are:

1. Direct government funding
2. Municipalities
3. Local services funded by municipalities
4. NGO funding from Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations
5. European Union funding
6. Foundations
7. Fundraising
8. Services paid by customer

Direct government funding

The direct government funding goes mainly towards keeping the basic structures for helping the victims going. The only government programs for perpetrators are run by national Criminal Sanctions Agency in prisons. Otherwise funding is mainly used for nationwide information gathering, awareness and violence shelter network.

Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL, Finnish Institute for health and welfare) organises the national level of help and does basic macro level research on domestic violence with Tilastokeskus – Statistics Finland. THL also organises direct government funding of shelters for victims of domestic violence (and their children if needed) as well as organizes awareness campaigns, education on good practices for professionals and Nollalinja, a nationwide free-of-charge helpline for anyone who has experienced violence or a threat of violence in a close relationship.

Nollalinja, various local shelters and several projects through the years have been provided by NGOs, with direct funding from Finnish government. The shelters have been non-commercial, and only one of them has been a private enterprise.

The amount shelters has been increasing steadily, although the numbers are still not sufficient. Ratifying the Istanbul convention speeded things up and Nollalinja was a direct result of ratifying the convention.

Outside the prison system men are underrepresented in national services for reduction of domestic violence in Finland, as both victims and perpetrators of violence. National services are officially targeted to non-gendered victims of domestic violence but allowing male victims of domestic violence into shelters has been hard until recent years. Nollalinja does take in perpetrators of domestic violence for counselling, but only discreetly and without advertising it.

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Municipalities

Municipalities have a responsibility to take care of the victims of domestic violence. This work has taken the form of workers in health care and social work ready to take in people who have domestic violence as part of their life. They only give basic support and forward them to different specialized services. After that, only shelters for domestic violence victims are the responsibility of the municipalities.

Local services funded by municipalities

Some of the services that municipalities provide are bought from NGOs. Especially in smaller and poorer municipalities the municipality may not have the resources to provide adequate services by their own workforce, so they seek out other service providers. This doesn't change what is provided, at least not for better. The service provider may have negotiated a deal with several municipalities, which lowers the costs but also makes the distances that the victims of violence have to travel longer.

Municipalities that are well-off are able to provide regular funding for the services for the perpetrators of violence. These services are only available in bigger cities in southern Finland.

NGO funding from Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations

Sosiaali- ja terveystörjestyksen avustuskeskus (STEA, Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations) is main provider for NGO funding in Finland. Funding is only provided for projects which are non-profit by nature and promote health and wellbeing. The funding come from the revenue of Finnish government-owned gaming monopoly Veikkaus Oy.

The programs that are funded are given points according to their utilitarian benefits. This is evaluated by the NGO reporting that is done every 2-3 years. The programs that show no benefits are given less money and can get their funding cut off if they can't show any improvement.

STEA funds both experimental projects and steady long-term work, but no research funding is ever provided by STEA. Most of the programs for domestic violence prevention get at least some of their funding from STEA.

This makes the funding steady and the cornerstone of Finnish work against domestic violence. Their reporting guarantees some quality in the work, but at the same time doesn't allow for scientific research on the effectiveness of programs and makes reporting large part of the NGO work.

European Union funding

Finnish organizations like NGOs and universities have applied successfully for European Social Fund (ESF) to test work methods and Erasmus funding to exchange knowledge on work against domestic violence. The participation in Daphne projects has been the most high-profile of these.

Foundations

Various Finnish and foreign foundations have provided money to reduce domestic violence in Finland. The foundations have been especially useful in finding funding for scientific work and artistic campaigns against domestic violence.

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Special case of a foundation funding is Lasten Päivän Säätiö (Children’s Day Foundation). This foundation gets its funding by running Linnanmäki, the oldest amusement park in Finland. The foundation is owned by six early Finnish NGOs that work for the safety of children. Each year the foundation gifts the profits of the amusement park to the work of these NGOs. This guarantees independent funding for these NGOs and at the same time gives Linnanmäki amusement park a great boost in popularity as all the profits from the amusement park go towards a good cause.

Fundraising

Fundraising has been successfully utilized by Finnish NGOs for decades to gather money for victims of domestic violence. This money has been utilised to build facilities and create awareness campaigns.

The general experience in the field has been, that raising funds for projects that help victims of violence and children or (younger) women is doable. People are not as eager to help perpetrators of violence and not a single organization has raised funds from the public for helping them. Only campaigns to get money to helping adult men have been about helping lonely elderly men find friends and hobbies.

In the 2010s, both fundraising and sponsorship deals have been successful when working with troubled young men. This success doesn’t apply for work with older youth or grown men.

Because of these facts, the fundraising campaigns for helping women and children who are victims of domestic violence are successful and regular. The funding by fundraising is one-sided in Finland, but this can’t be helped.

The only downside to fundraising has been, that there have been several con artists who have raised funds to help children who are victims of domestic violence and/or bullying. Money gathered in these heartfelt campaigns was not used to help the children. Because of this most NGOs that use fundraising

Crowdfunding laws in Finland have been very strict to avoid scams. Because of this there have been no crowdfunded services, innovations or products that would have helped the work against domestic violence.

Services paid by customer

Services directly paid by customer have not been abundant in Finland. Practically all programs that work with people who want to reduce their own use of violence are free for the participants. Only personal therapy and/or guidance paid by customer is commonly bought by the customers.

The reason for this is the perceived secrecy of these services. The men who are either using violence or victims of it (or both) may want to keep their situation secret. They may think that personal counselling is more private than other services. This isn’t actually true, as both child welfare laws and criminal law apply, and all service providers have to report the same crimes.

Structure of organizations

Because of these monetary structures the programs in Finland have been spending time for the last 15 years trying to show with different measurement techniques how effective their work is. The programs that are working have more professional structures because of this and reporting has become a higher priority for them during these years.

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The only work forms that work for working with men against domestic violence are the STEA funding, European Union funding, general foundation money and funding from the municipalities that have enough money to allocate to work against domestic violence with perpetrators.

Because of this the work with victims is better funded and most organizations try to do it too.

The work with victims is more tightly knitted with the government sector than the one that is done in the perpetrators. Some of this is because the governmental/municipal funding they have ties them to local health care, social work and law enforcement. The laws concerning violence and reporting are strict, especially if there are children involved or the risk of future violence is evident, so exchange of information can be mandatory. When working with victims of violence that don't identify themselves as perpetrators this can work well. The people who have experienced violence in their close relationships may be afraid to give out information about their close relationships, but it is assumed that at least they have less reasons to choose what they talk about because they fear incriminating themselves.

Programs that work with perpetrators in Finland are less likely to have direct ties to governmental organisations. The most common ones are with police or prison system, as they redirect people to work in various programs. When working with male perpetrators, this redirection can be very useful in getting men into programs. Unfortunately, the lesser role the men play in choosing to participate in a program, the less likely they are to complete the program or to internalize the change that the program seeks to instil in them. These men are also the least likely to be afraid of information sharing. The main thing these men fear if the information is shared is losing connection to their children.

The programs for perpetrator have to assume that their patients are more likely to withhold information or misrepresent the events in their life than in the victim programs. They have done something that brought them into the program in the first place. They may be embarrassed, afraid, angry, in denial or unwilling to self-incriminate. This unwillingness can lead to men not participating in programs or that their participation will not have the desired effect on them.

The men who participate in programs because they want to are the likeliest to change their behaviour. Getting them to participate in programs is doable if the marketing is targeted at them and their own willingness to change is given room. Working with these men can be very cost-effective as they are willing to change their behaviour and attitudes in timely manner and the change is more likely to become permanent.

Unfortunately, the men who have used the most violence and are probably going to use it again are not willing to participate in programs on their own volition. But because they are likely to use violence again and again in the future, getting them into program is seen as a high priority. Even if working them is hit-and-miss, the few hits are likely to have such a great impact

In Finland this problem has been addressed by having different programs for men who are wanting to participate in these programs and for men who are referred to these programs by authorities. Different audiences need different approaches, especially when using peer groups as a tool for change.

Examples of the first one would be Lyömätön Linja by Miessakit and Miesten Keskus (Men's Help Clinic) in Mikkeli by Viola – Väkivallasta Vapaaksi ry, where men can come in anonymously. These programs are based on men's own experience and peer-orientation. The men have to be aware of their problem and worried about it enough to want to participate. Getting men to participate is thus harder, but they are more likely to complete the program.

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The examples for latter could be prison programs that concentrate on group sessions where domestic violence is discussed, or Lyömätön Linja in Espoo, where men are often referred to the program by the police. The authorities can find these men because their violence has not remained hidden. These programs have clear referral routes to get men into their programs, but the men are less likely to change.

Anonymity and willingness to change as main scales

The whole range of programs could be measured in two variables. The first one would be anonymity vs. information sharing -scale. The second would be the target audience on willing to change+hard to get into program vs. the unwilling to change+can be referred into program by authorities+most likely to use violence again -scale.

The different funding routes dictate which route different programs can take. The funding comes usually with strings attached.

Caring Dads program would be positioned in the extreme information sharing part of the scale. The men in Caring Dads programs would be from the “unwilling to change+can be referred into program by authorities+most likely to use violence again” end of the spectrum.

When comparing to Finnish examples, it would be likely that authorities would be very willing to refer men to these programs. Men themselves would be unwilling to change and likely to drop out of the program if there would no sanctions for leaving the program. The results are not likely to be uniformly good in the long run as men are participating for external reasons.

Then again the probability that the men in CD target group will use violence against their spouses and/or children is so great that the lesser percentage of men that would change their attitudes and avoid using violence in the future would be compensated by the amount of violence prevented by the intervention.

The funding systems that Caring Dads has used in Canada and Great Britain would not be applicable in Finland without modification. Caring Dads program could only be implemented in Finland by some NGO that would form ties with local municipality and seek money for the work from both Stea (Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations) and foundations. Local municipality would likely be unable or unwilling to fund such a program because the only municipalities that are willing to fund work with perpetrators have already chosen partners for this work.

Made by Joonas Kekkonen

Development and Training Manager

MISSAKIT RY

Annankatu 16 B 28 00120 Helsinki

puh. 09 6126 620

miessakit@miessakit.fi