

What works? Defining and evaluating the effectiveness of perpetrator programs in a changing context

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The national context

What changed?

ViVa Project
I ed. 2017-2020
II ed. 2022-2025

Two main levels

- analysing main characteristics and practices of specialized and general services in the field of anti-violence;
- evaluating the policies and measures foreseen by the national anti-violence plans

Two national surveys on PPs

Mapping and analyzing main characteristics of perpetrator programs (managing bodies, organizational aspects, staff, training, network, activities, data on men, loans, etc.)

- 1st national survey 2018
- 2nd national survey 2023

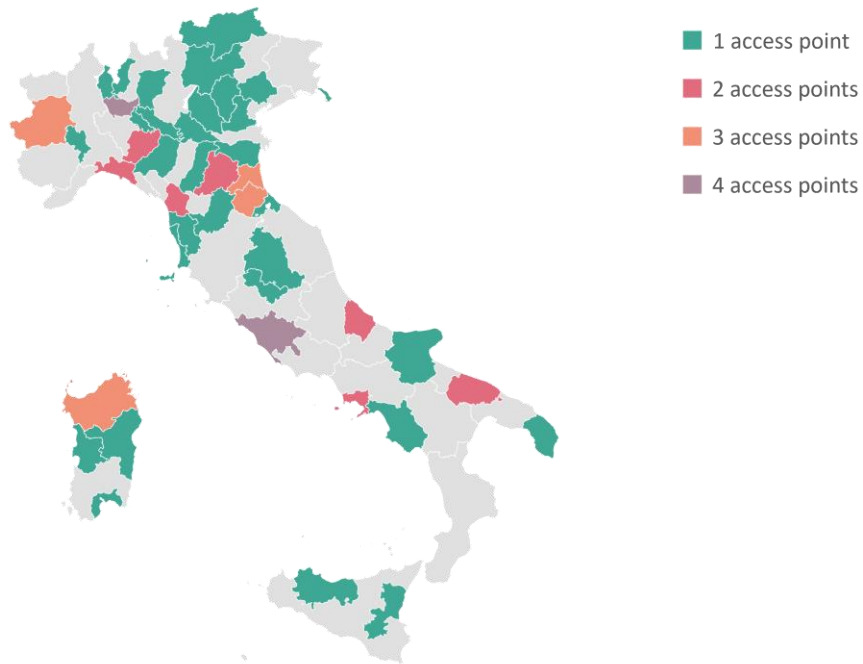
Main contextual changes in 5 years

- Law n. 69/2019: men **charged with a crime of VAW** and who are legally entitled to a suspension of the execution of the sentence, are required to attend a PP.
- Law 126/2020: **structural funding** for the establishment and expansion of PPs.
- State-Regions Agreement 14 Sept. 2022 on Minimum Standards for PPs (2022)



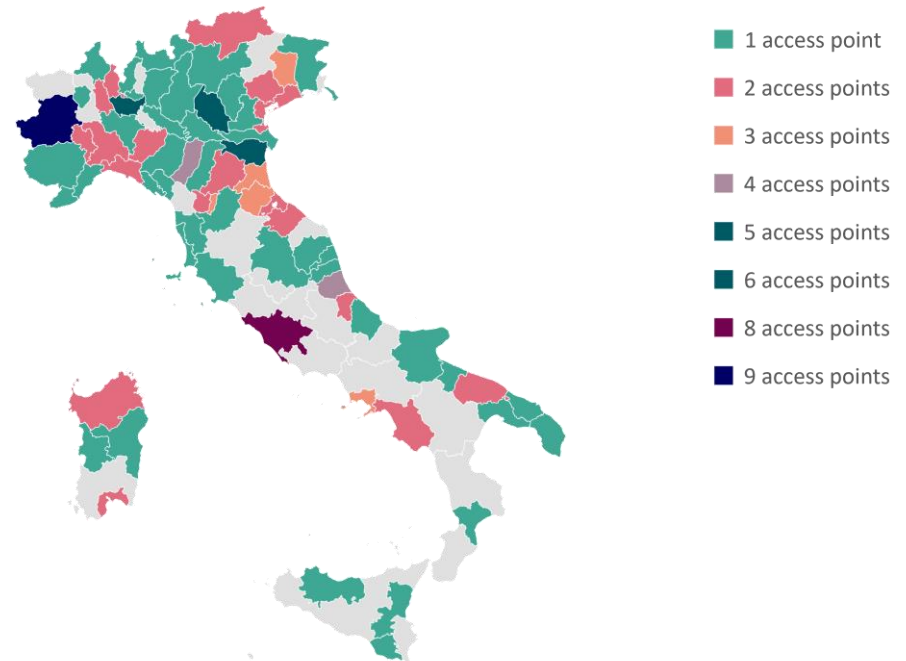
What changed at a territorial level?

PPs access points by province as at 31.12.2017



**54 PPs (69 access points)
as at 31° of December 2017**

PPs access points by province as at 31.12.2022



**94 PPs (141 access points)
as at 31° of December 2022**



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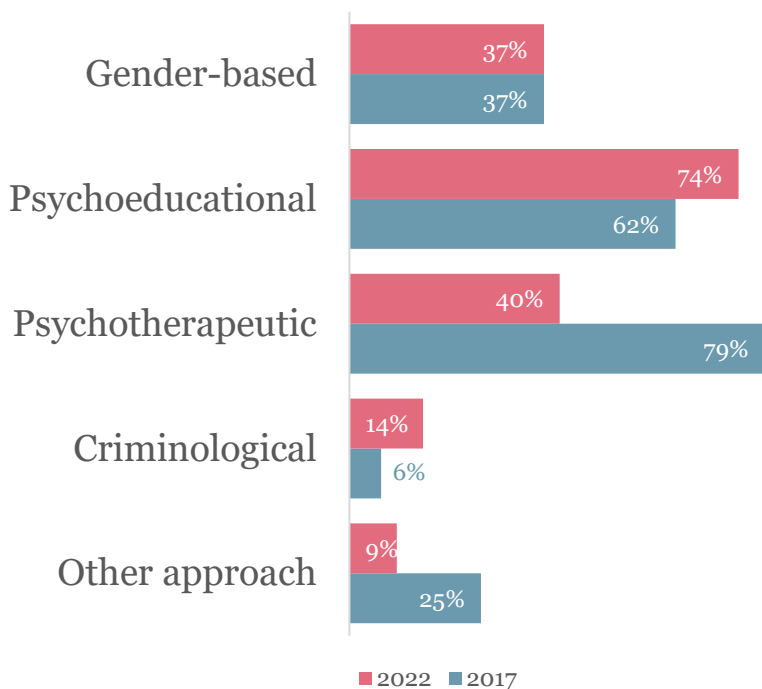
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Changes in the approaches adopted by the PPs

PPs by approaches. Years 2017 and 2020.
Percentage



Approaches of PPs. Years 2017 and 2020.
N. and % change

	2017	2022	Δ
Gender-based	19	35	+84%
Psychoeducational	32	70	+119%
Psychotherapeutic	41	38	-7%
Criminological	3	13	+333%
Other approach	13	8	-38%
Number of PPs	54	94	



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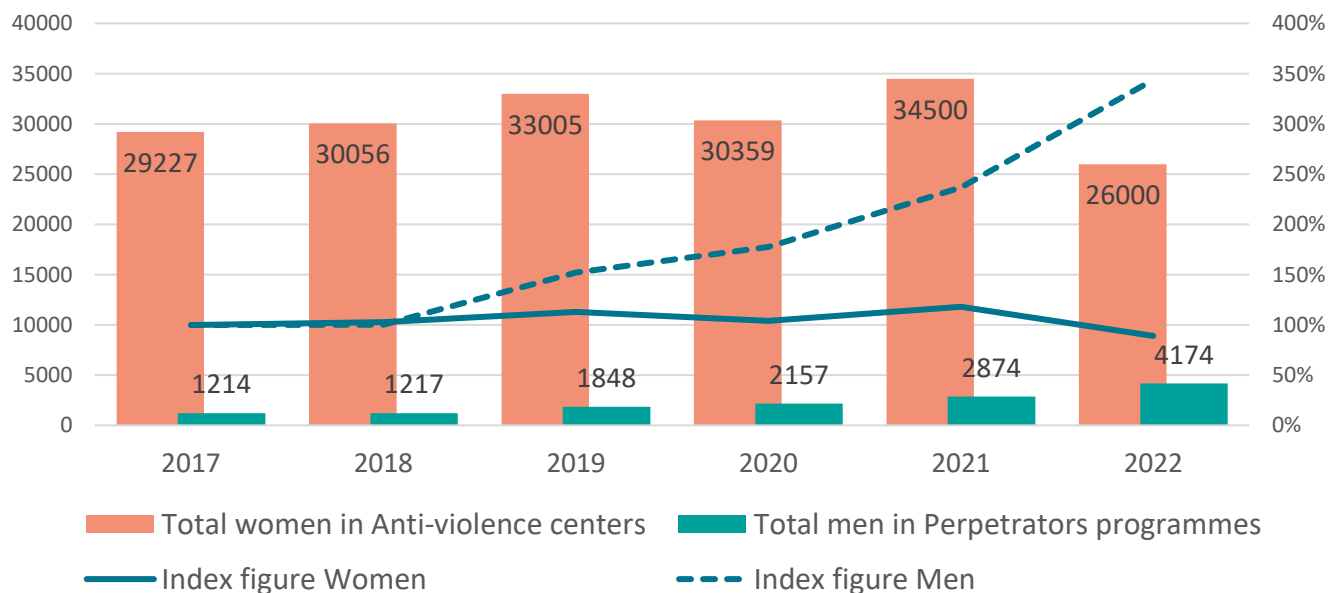
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The dramatic increase in men attending PPs

Men attending the PPs in 2017 and 2020. Numbers and average

	2017	2022
Men attending the PPs during the year	1,214	4,174
of which: new admissions during the year	573	2,802

Men attending the PPs and women attending Antiviolence centers. Years 2017-2022. Numbers and Index figures.



Sources: CNR and ISTAT



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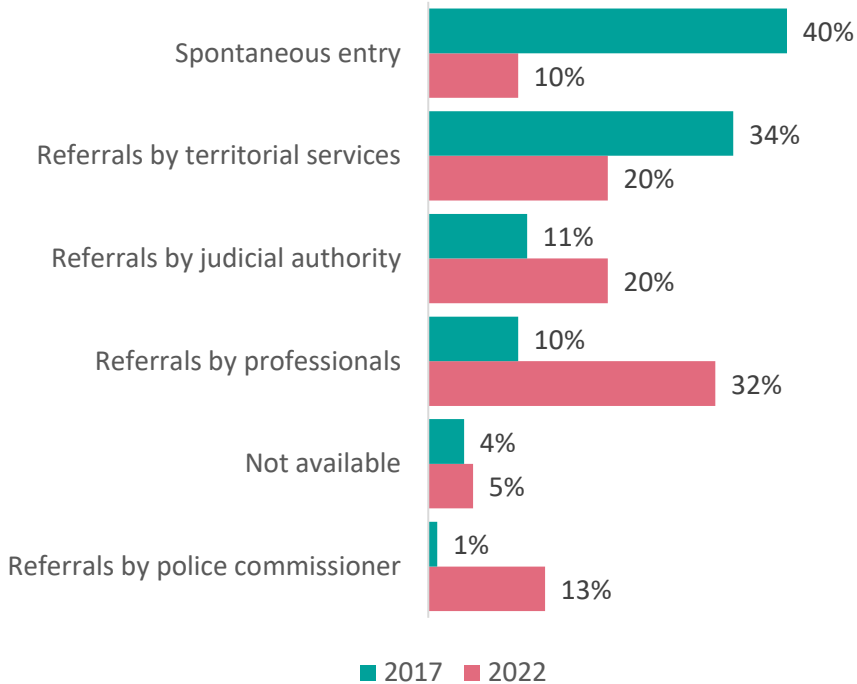
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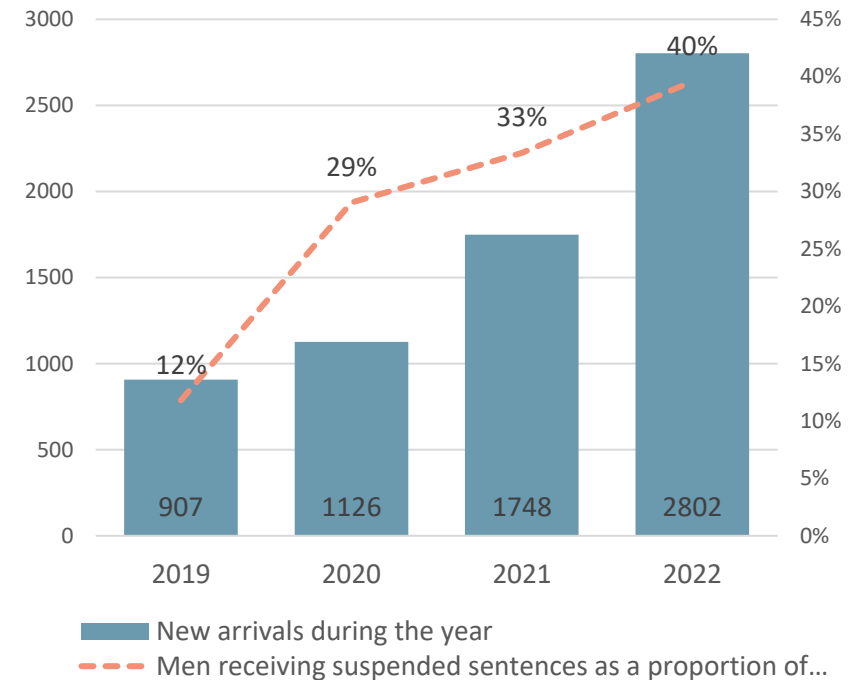
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Men who access to PPs is also changing...

Men attending the PPs by mode of access. Years 2017 and 2022. Numbers and percentages



Men receiving suspended sentences as a proportion of new arrivals. Years 2019-2022



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The demand for accountability from stakeholders and civil society

PPs as a shortcut to avoid prison?

The concern is that these PPs are becoming places of quick penance and bleaching whereby the man goes through the intervention and suddenly becomes candid, good and gets the positive report [Women Services Representative c]

Does high recidivism mean lack of effectiveness?

They pretend to ignore that male violence is the crime that has the highest recidivism rate. To admit such a thing is to recognize that the tools put in place cannot guarantee immediate rehabilitation. [Women Services Representative a)]

Is partner's contact dangerous?

Their indicators are based on what the woman tells them during the [contact partner] interviews, which is whether the man continues to be an abuser, stalker, etc. They should make their own indicators, don't bother the anti-violence centres and leave the women in peace. [Women services representative b]

Why PPs do not predict femicides?

We don't even know how they evaluate their interventions. Do they evaluate the risk factor? Do they assess recidivism? Because somebody has to explain to me why we have men who have gone through a PP intervention and then they go out and kill. [Union Representative b]



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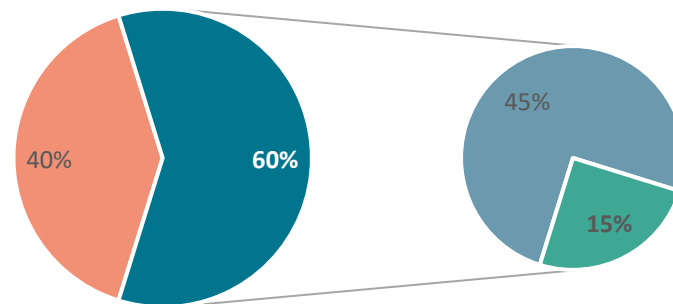
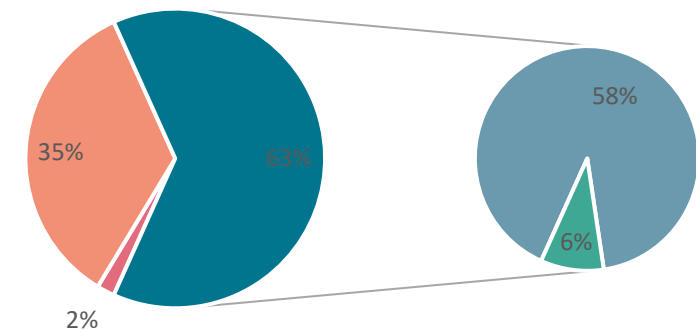


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Who carries out the evaluation effectiveness and how?

PPs according to the type of evaluation carried out. **Year 2017.**
Percentage values

PPs according to the type of evaluation carried out. **Year 2023.**
Percentage values



■ Not available
■ Self-assessed only

■ Not evaluated
■ External evaluated only or also

■ Not evaluated
■ External evaluated only or also

■ Self-assessed only



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Evaluation Projects Overview

Projects	Evaluation Design & Methodology	Object of evaluation	Participants
P1	pre-post quasi - experimental study with self-report questionnaires, partner reports (where available)	Treatment outcomes (T0-T1) Psychological, personality and cultural characteristics of users	43 perpetrators; 15 (former) partners; 99 control group
P2	Standardized, longitudinal measurement of treatment outcomes and the impact of violence on victims with IMPACT questionnaire	Treatment outcomes (T1-T3); impacts of violence on victims (T1-T3)	65 perpetrators; 53 (former) partners
P3	1. Qualitative-quantitative monitoring of treatment outcomes; 2. Modeling of the "integrated treatment program"	Treatment outcomes (T0-T1); methodology of intervention	45 perpetrators within the prison system; 48 perpetrators outside the prison system
P4	Qualitative-quantitative data collection on impact of warning procedures and treatment outcomes in 11 cities	Treatment outcomes ; psychological, personality and cultural characteristics of users and (ex)partners; training administered to FFOO operators	148 police officers; 3 perpetrators and 3 (former) partners for the focus group; 14 (former) partners and 31 perpetrators for the survey
P5	Qualitative-quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of treatment; participant observation	Treatment outcomes (T0 -T3); psychological, personality and cultural characteristics of users	ND



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What are the goals of the evaluation projects?

Goals of the evaluation project		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Main goals	Improving the programme's intervention	✓	✓			✓
	Validation of the intervention model			✓	✓	
Secondary goals	Exploration and knowledge about the field	✓				✓
	Creation of an effectiveness assessment tool	✓				✓

What works? /intervention

Conceptualization of success

Interruption of violence and reduction of the risk of recidivism

If we think of **violence as an on/off situation**, as something quantitative or a check list to be filled in at the beginning and at the end, in order to be able to tell ourselves, well, how good we are [...] **this doesn't tell us anything** [O1 - practitioner].

Responsibility, reflexivity and awareness of the behaviour impact

I believe that the most important indicator, although difficult to monitor and to assess, is **responsibility**. So how much that man took responsibility for what happened in **the way he dialogues, tells what happened, and reflects on the consequences** that there may have been on the other person. [O1 - practitioner]

Increased agency, safety and wellbeing of (former) partners and children

In general terms, **all programmes should work towards victims' safety**. So, we could discuss how do you define victim safety? For me it's pretty obvious: that there's **no fear**, that the **consequences of the man's violence are not there anymore**, that the **victim feels safe and empowered**, that the **children is also feeling safe** [V2 - researcher]



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What works? /intervention

Conceptualization of effectiveness

Should the definition of effectiveness also include prediction?

It is important to reflect on what are the **expectations** on this work. If these expectations are the nullification of the possibility of committing violence or a 100 percent success rate, these seem beyond any logic to me. No one thinks that everyone who comes out of drug addiction services will never use substances again. On the PPs instead there is an idea that somehow we are magic and we are going to cure all the male perpetrators of violence in this country. [O5 - practitioner]

Can the definition of effectiveness also include the function of social control?

[...] **the function of the PPs is also quite independent of treatment outcomes.** [...] if PPs are **aligned with the Istanbul standards** and a gendered approach, and if they do the **work embedded within a network of services**, there may be value in not taking some of the men in. [...] I would not want **all the debate about outcomes to obscure the social monitoring function of PPs.** For example, for very dangerous subjects who are often sent back to the territory. [...] What do we do with these perpetrators? [P2 - practitioner]



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What works? /in evaluation

Methodological issues (1)

Quantitative methods

The test has to be something that **does not fatigue the therapist or the person** in the first place, but that can **allow instant communication** with him. Something that becomes actually effective in our clinical practice, something **usable and useful**. [O1 - practitioner]

It was a fairly intense **questionnaire** about **stereotypical attitudes and beliefs** and **sexist behaviors** that somehow lead men to minimize violent behaviors toward the partner [V5a - researcher]

Qualitative methods

A strength point is the **interview**, [...] in my opinion on such a multifaceted and a complex issue such as violence an interview has an edge over a test. It's true that the test is more standardized, however, the interview allows you to get to a different point, it manages to see more of the facets of things that on a piece of paper you don't see, that's it [O5 - practitioner]

we paired the quantitative protocol with the **participant observation**, which provided us with a lot of qualitative data on what was happening and also **what was changing** from the point of view of men's perceptions with respect to the **social constructs of violence** [V5b – researcher]

[The **Focus Group**] is a tool a little bit invasive, in the sense that participants have to attend in presence, have to show their face to other people [...]it's as if they are being asked to do an extra piece, which is not strictly related to their situation of fragility they are experiencing [O4c – practitioner]



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What works? /in evaluation

Methodological and practice issues (2)

The (former) partner perspective

We thought it was interesting to go and see if there was any **concordance or complete divergence in the interpretation of risk factors by the victim and offender** [V1 - researcher]

Contacting the partner **involved additional work** for them and so they **did not have as much resources** to spend, human resources to dedicate to this engagement. And **they preferred to do it themselves**, so they didn't give us the names to contact. [V5a – researcher]

The follow-up procedure

If we could repeat the analysis in a different situation from that period, with **sufficient resources**, with a longer time frame – I would include a follow up analysis. It would make it possible to see **how sustainable these changes are over time, how much they remain stable** over time in the perception of the practitioner and the perpetrator [...] That would be, in my opinion, the **true signal of effectiveness**." [V3b - researcher]

there is also an **economic issue**, because in any case to do a follow up, in order to understand how things went maybe six months, a year later, is an **energy and economic expenditure** that unfortunately **we cannot afford** [O5 – practitioner]



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What works? /in intervention and evaluation

Contextual issues

Relations between PPs, local actors and networks

At system level, another element to be kept under observation should be **the network** that is created with territorial services. [...] So it is an indicator that has to be placed somewhat in the premise, and a dimension that **continually contributes to the success** of such a model. [V3b - researcher].

Our idea was for this project to become a project incorporated into the territorial network, and this did not happen, because there is **no possibility of funding training for territorial services professionals**. We cannot offer free training [O4b - practitioner]

Economic and Human Resources

And I have to say that this is not easy, in the sense that since **there is no funding**, in the sense that even our Convention was just a convention, let's say, of commitment to carry on a project, but **without dedicated funds it's not easy**, is it? From our point of view you can do it for one year. [V5a – University researcher]



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The relevance of evidence-based evaluation

Collaborative and mutual researcher – practitioner partnership (Gondolf, 2015)

we can't tell ourselves as a clinician and ask the question and tell us the answer and tell us how good we are, **research gives us the chance to give a little bit more objective and more tangible feedback** in terms of what we do [O1 - practitioner]

it is necessary to write **articles that have impact, practical implications**, otherwise the practitioners fail to reflect and take the research results as something that can be **formative and useful** for their work [V5a - researcher]

Accountability

It is also a moment of **accountability to the outside world**, we put it on the website, so whatever is the result of the evaluation, we have to be able to give explanations and to interpret it. [P2 - practitioner]



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Lessons learned

- ✓ **Evaluation design:** define success and social function of programmes
- ✓ **Methodology:** 1) questionnaires integrated in clinical practice; 2) qualitative methods can help in deepening the dynamics of violence and change
- ✓ **More resources** are needed!
- ✓ **Collaboration** between research and practice: definition of goals



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