

CASE STUDY: YWCA Thebes – creating policy changes

Ratifying the Istanbul Convention

Our case study is about structural barriers and how these could be overcome using advocacy and also how women's leadership has made a positive difference. Gender based violence is a big barrier to achieving gender equality therefore it also becomes a barrier to women's leadership.



The power of collective actions/advocacy

The power of peer to peer support

The power of fighting for a cause

The power of solidarity

Women worked collectively supporting each other and became leaders in their societies as they fought for a cause

The Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) is considered to be the best legal instrument to fight domestic violence against women and children. It was signed in 2011 by 42 countries, amongst them Greece.

However up to 2018, only 22 Governments had ratified the Convention, in other words took responsibility to improve their legislation in order to prevent violence against women, and Greece was not one of them.

When the National YWCA of Greece took action and decided to put pressure on the Government for the ratification of the Convention all 23 YWCA local centres in Greece worked collectively with other Women's Organizations and informed the societies, and the local authorities about the importance of the ratification of the Convention

YWCA of Thebes is one of the 23 local centres of the National YWCA of Greece that took action in two steps:

Step 1 - By advocating and organizing several activities we manage to raise awareness about the violence against women. Our community was broadly informed that violence against women and children is a violation of human rights. It appears in many forms and happens everywhere, in the house, the neighbourhood, the school, at work, etc., in the private and public sphere. Even more, most of the times, violence against women is very well hidden, as women are afraid to talk.

Step 2 - This advocacy initiative had another purpose: to gather as many signatures as possible on a petition which was going to be handed over to the Prime Minister's Office, the President of the Parliament and all the heads of the Parliamentary Parties. The petition's title was: Women and children. No more victims of Violence. We sign for an Equal and Just Society.

The members and volunteers of YWCA of Thebes managed to collect more than 2.000 signatures, out of a total of 15.000 throughout Greece and that was a great success for our small community. These signatures and the petition were handed over to the President of the Greek Parliament by the President of the National YWCA of Greece.

The Convention of the Council of Europe (Istanbul Convention) was finally ratified in March 2018 and it became a law in our country to benefit all women by preventing and eliminating gender based violence opening new roads to their trip to leadership.