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Public policies aimed at combating violence against women in Brazil: a case study

Palloma Rosa Ferreira, *Universidade Federal de Tocantins*

Diego Neves de Sousa, *Embrapa Pesca e Aquicultura/Analista de Transferência de Tecnologia*

Abstract. With the aim of presenting the cycle of the National Policy to Combat Violence Against Women in Brazil, documentary research and literature review were conducted to analyze the main advances achieved and the outcomes of this policy in society. It is important to highlight the role of educational institutions, where research and extension centers and groups are concentrated, such as the Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Center of the Federal University of Viçosa (NIEG/UFV), which, through the “Programa Casa das Mulheres” (Women’s House Program), contributed to the consolidation of the Women’s Support Network for Victims of Violence by offering alternatives and possibilities for addressing violence. Despite the path that still needs to be taken, the approval and implementation of public policies have enabled progress in combating violence against women, with concrete actions being implemented across the three levels of government.

Keywords: Public policy cycle. Gender violence. Women's House Program.



Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present the cycle of the Public Policy for Combating Violence Against Women in Brazil, using secondary data to provide an overview of the main advances achieved and their developments in the contemporary context. This is a National Policy created in 2007, implemented at the federal, state, and municipal levels, aimed at preventing and combating gender-based violence against women, as well as offering assistance to women in situations of violence, taking into account the specific needs of the target audience and the distinct situations experienced by women. To this end, it is essential to contextualize the intricacies surrounding gender issues, observed in the inequalities between men and women, which are naturalized and reproduced in society, and the ongoing manifestations of violence against women (VAW).

Considering that, despite numerous initiatives, movements, and discussions regarding the role of women in contemporary societies, gender inequalities are still frequently observed in our daily lives, whether openly or subtly. The various forms of violence are witnessed in social interaction spaces and are often portrayed by the mass media, reflected in the findings of various studies conducted by Educational and Research Institutions in the country, and discussed at congresses and academic meetings held with the aim of highlighting the issue of gender inequalities.

Several influential scholars have contributed to understanding the social construction of gender inequalities. Rubin (1975), considered one of the pioneers in this field, argues that the hierarchy between men and women cannot be explained solely by biology but results from social and cultural arrangements that transform sexual difference into gender inequality. In other words, her approach shifts the focus from biological distinctions to the analysis of symbolic and social structures. Along the same lines, Badinter (1995) critiques the notion that roles, behaviors, and inequalities between the sexes are natural or inevitable. She emphasizes that the differences attributed to men and women are historically produced, legitimized, and naturalized by societies. Scott (1995), in turn, deepens the debate by proposing gender as an analytical category that transcends biological difference, constituting a central

element of social relations. According to her, gender functions as a fundamental means of organizing power relations, sustaining hierarchies and inequalities. More recently, Butler (2013, 2021) expands these discussions by problematizing the idea of gender as something fixed, advocating for its understanding as a performative construction, continuously reproduced through acts, gestures, discourse, and everyday practices. In this sense, she situates the analysis of gender inequality within an intersectional perspective, also considering markers such as race, class, sexuality, and other forms of oppression.

In view of this, studies related to the category of gender have been decisive and essential in recognizing the dynamics of violence within the family environment, as they have enabled an understanding of the socially constructed roles between men and women as propagators of unequal hierarchical relationships. Gender-based analyses have brought visibility to domestic violence as a multifaceted phenomenon, requiring political and social responses to address the issue (Gomes *et al.*, 2007).

Thus, in the next section, the contributions of some authors dedicated to studying gender issues and the manifestations of oppression faced by women in society will be presented, as well as the importance of bringing these discussions to light for the improvement and direction of public policies to combat violence against women.

Gender Inequality and Violence Against Women

According to Saffiotti (1999), the inequality experienced between men and women in society is socially constructed, and in this sense, the term gender refers to the relationships specifically established between men and women. The author states that “gender-based violence, including its family and domestic forms, does not occur randomly, but derives from a social organization of gender that privileges the masculine” (Saffiotti, 1999, p. 86)¹.

Bourdieu (2012) emphasizes that it is through the biological distinction between sexes, present in the male and female bodies and primarily based on the anatomical difference between sexual organs, that a justification has been used to reinforce discrimination and male

¹ Own translation.



dominance over women, which directly influenced the social division of labor.

In this context, according to Carmo (2015), the discussion of male identity is linked both to the dimension of work and to gender, as it has the power to influence the construction of masculinity. Thus, it is crucial to recognize the interconnection between class and gender actions:

[...] a critique of capital, as a social relation, must necessarily apprehend the dimension of exploitation present in the capital/labor relationship as well as the oppressive dimensions present in the man/woman relationship, so that the struggle for the constitution of gender-for-itself also enables the emancipation of the female gender (Antunes, 2010, p. 53).

In this way, the author highlights the need to pursue emancipation in relation to both capitalism and gender, confronting all forms of oppression and domination.

It is worth mentioning, as Moreno (1999) adds, that the androcentric conception still dominates society, and overcoming it is a difficult task, since women themselves often conform to androcentrism by sharing its assumptions, at times acting as its main transmitters. Continuing this reflection, the author refers to the power of language, which she conceives as a system of collective thought with the capacity to convey how a large portion of social actors feel, think, and act. In this sense, discourses can serve to legitimize inequalities and maintain hegemonic forms of power. The relationship between men and women exemplifies this situation, with sexist and patriarchal discourses still present in various spheres of women's social life. According to Moreno (1999, p. 34), "words that conceal implicit ideas act as stimulants or repressors with an effectiveness far greater than that of clearly formulated discourses"².

However, Santos (2013)³ emphasizes that there are contradictions within discourses, which may indicate that the reproduction of the previously established order is not entirely convincing. In other words,

² Own translation.

³ Own translation.

what is naturalized begins to be contested, opening the way for change. This allows spaces for hegemonies to be displaced or modified, and for the instituted order to give way to the instituting power (transformation of the established).

The perpetuation of domination and violence against women has created conditions for advances in discussions at national and, especially, international levels, through conventions and conferences⁴, which directly influenced the development of public policies in Brazil. This is because Brazil has signed and ratified, internationally, through treaties, agreements, and conventions, commitments to eliminate gender discrimination and enhance women's citizenship rights (SEPM, 2003).

In Brazil, Law Number 11.340 of August 7, 2006 (known as the Maria da Penha Law⁵) was created precisely to

curb and prevent domestic and family violence against women, in accordance with § 8 of Article 226 of the Federal Constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, and other international treaties ratified by the Federative Republic of Brazil. It provides for the establishment of Domestic and Family Violence Courts and establishes measures of assistance and protection for women in situations of domestic and family violence (Brazil, 2006)⁶⁷.

Universities also represent important spaces for promoting studies on violence against women, seeking to understand its consequences and the factors that trigger acts of violence. Such studies foster various

⁴ As an example, some of these events held around the world include: 1975 – World Conference on Women (Mexico); 1979 – United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); 1980 – World Conference on Women (Copenhagen); 1985 – World Conference on Women (Nairobi); 1993 – World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna); 1994 – Belém do Pará Convention (Brazil); 1995 – World Conference on Women (Beijing).

⁵ It was named after the biopharmaceutical Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes, who became paraplegic after surviving two attempted femicides by her husband. By taking her case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, she mobilized efforts to create legislation that would provide protection for victims of violence in Brazil.

⁶ Own translation.

⁷ Own translation.



discussions, including the importance of creating public policies targeted at this specific population, requiring attention from governmental spheres and effective instruments to combat such violence.

These efforts are complemented by the actions carried out by feminist and women's movements, which have been decisive in confronting violence against women. Consequently, the State began to recognize these violent acts as a political problem, and these mobilizations and demands entered the public agenda, influencing the development of public policies.

Public policies, according to Rua (2009, p. 17-18), "comprise the set of decisions and actions related to the mandatory allocation of values involving public goods. (...) They generally involve more than one decision and require several strategically selected actions to implement the decisions made."

Thus, public policies bring together a set of decisions, encompassed by governmental plans and actions at the national, state, or municipal levels, aimed at solving problems of collective interest (Souza, 2006).

Accordingly, public action has increasingly been analyzed based on partial phases of the political-administrative problem-solving process. Common to all proposals are the phases of formulation, implementation, and impact assessment, with the policy cycle serving as a reference for processual analysis, although it is not regarded as a fixed sequence (Trevisan; Van Bellen, 2008).

This issue will be further discussed in the next section, which analyzes the phases of the National Policy to Combat Violence against Women, aiming to provide an overview of the main advances achieved, the difficulties encountered, and the challenges that have been addressed but still require attention.

Public Policies for Combating Violence Against Women and Their Developments

The period between 2003 and 2010 was emblematic in the formulation of public policies from a gender perspective, with changes in

legislation, the dissemination of studies revealing statistical data on violence rates, the creation of specialized services, and the formulation of national plans to address the complex and multifaceted issue of violence against women (Coelho *et al.*, 2014)⁸.

In this context, Shelters and Specialized Women's Police Stations (DEAMs) were, until 2003, the main organizations established by federal, state, and municipal governments to assist women who were victims of domestic, family, and sexual violence, with a focus on public safety and social assistance. These actions formed the basis of the National Program for Combating Violence Against Women, which was managed by the State Secretariat for Women's Rights (SEDIM), affiliated with the Ministry of Justice (Brazil, 2011 b).

However, with the creation of the Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM) in 2003, which had the status of a ministry and was responsible for advising the President of the Republic on the formulation, coordination, and articulation of policies for women and organizing the National Plan for Women's Policy (PNPM), there were calls to consider the multidimensional aspect of the problem. This led to an expanded approach, seeking support from various areas such as health, education, public safety, social assistance, justice, and culture (Brazil, 2011a)⁹.

Given this reality, the services available at that time were unable to meet the needs of victims of violence with a more comprehensive and targeted approach. Thus, from 2003 onwards, with the creation of the SPM, there was an expansion of Public Policies for Combating Violence Against Women, aimed at understanding actions in the areas of prevention, ensuring rights, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions (Brazil, 2011a).

Through the Secretariat, there was a revival of the National Council on Women's Rights (CNDM), which has always advocated for the creation of public policies with a gender perspective. Additionally, through the SPM, with the support of women's movements and in alignment with the National Congress, the Maria da Penha Law was finally approved. This law is committed to defining "a national policy aimed at promoting gender equity and reducing the various forms of social vulnerability among women" (Coelho *et al.*, 2014, p.16). This

⁸ Own translation.

⁹ Own translation.



legislation can be considered the greatest achievement of all the efforts of feminists across Brazil aimed at curbing domestic, family, and sexual violence (Pinto, 2010)¹⁰.

In the following year, in 2004, through the Ministry of Health, which had already recognized and declared that violence against women was also a health issue and should therefore be included in public policies, the National Network for Violence Prevention and Health Promotion was established through Ordinance GM/MS No. 936/2004 issued by the Ministry itself (Coelho *et al.*, 2014).

With the regulation of the Ordinance, mandatory notification of violence against women was established in the Notification of Diseases Information System (SINAN), for both victims treated in public and private health services. This allowed for the creation of a crucial database to map violence in Brazil and to guide public policies.

Within this context, the holding of the First National Conference on Women's Policies (CNPM) in 2004 was decisive, during which the First National Plan for Women's Policy (PNPM) was developed. Three years later, in 2007, the Second PNPM was formulated, leading to the creation of the Policy and the National Pact for Combating Violence Against Women, which operates at all three government levels. The Pact aims to formulate and establish concepts, guidelines, and actions for both the prevention and combating of violence against women (Leandro, 2014).

In this context, Bugni (2016)¹¹ highlights that these Plans were reviewed and evaluated, with the main guidelines being renegotiated, considering a management approach that was both integrated and multidimensional, capable of addressing the challenge. Thus, the occurrence of the Third PNPM from 2012 to 2015 is observed, which consolidates a successful history of participation, analysis, and renegotiation, with innovations in the central aspects of public policy.

In this context, for the more effective and balanced functioning of policies promoting the defense of women's rights, the Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM) established the Women's Policy Organism (OPM), which is responsible for formulating, monitoring, and

¹⁰ Own translation.

¹¹ Own translation.

coordinating these policies. To this end, the implementation of public policies at the state and municipal levels is guided by Federal Government determinations and guidelines, developed with the necessary adjustments to address local specifics, but always in alignment with national plans and pacts (Martins; Cerqueira; Matos, 2015). In the absence of the OPM, the Women's Council is responsible for coordinating the policy at the state level, in coordination with various sectors and municipalities (Campos *et al*, 2009)¹².

It should be emphasized that the action proposals presented in the National Pact are anchored in gender mainstreaming, considering that violence and inequality intersect with a diversity of sectoral public policies. Intersectorality involves coordinated actions among sectoral bodies and actors present in different governmental levels, as well as the coordination between national and local policies in areas such as health, justice, education, and public safety. This leads to a third premise: the reach of these actions, extending the proposal for implementing a national policy to combat violence against women down to local governments (Brazil, 2011b).

Thus, given the context of the emergence of the National Policy for Combating Violence Against Women, it is appropriate to present the policy cycle and its developments and impacts on Brazilian society.

Problem Identification and Agenda Formation

Thus, through the visibility of the problem of violence against women, and considering that such transgression constitutes a crime and a violation of human rights, the discussions gained momentum, as previously presented. There were pressures from social actors involved in both non-governmental and governmental spheres to form an agenda that would address the multidimensional nature of the problem.

As Secchi (2010)¹³ highlights, a public problem can manifest for a long time without receiving due attention because society becomes accustomed to living with it, as in the case of the naturalization and perpetuation of inequality between men and women, and among its

¹² Own translation.

¹³ Own translation.



various consequences, violence against women. Another aspect raised by the author is that a situation begins to be contested when it starts to affect the perception of many relevant actors, such as research institutions, international organizations, social movements, and other non-governmental and governmental organizations.

According to Secchi (2010, p.36), "the agenda is a set of problems or themes considered relevant." Thus, problems can enter and exit the agenda as they gain prominence and relevance; however, they can also have their importance diminished and no longer be considered by interest groups.

As a result, gender inequalities and the fight against violence against women have become firmly established on the public agenda, defining them as public issues rather than being confined to the private sphere.

In the National Policy, the intention was to incorporate into the agenda crucial topics related to violence against women in its various forms—domestic, psychological, physical, moral, patrimonial, sexual, human trafficking, and sexual harassment—which affect women from different social classes, backgrounds, ages, regions, marital statuses, education levels, races, and sexual orientations. The aim is for the policy to encompass all the modalities through which violence manifests. From this perspective, attention must also be given to the rights of women in prison and the fight against the feminization of AIDS (Brazil, 2011b).

Formulation of Alternatives and Decision-Making

Regarding the formulation of alternatives, Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl (2013, p.123) add that through the formulation of alternatives "the identification, refinement, and formalization of policy options that can help solve the issues and problems recognized in the agenda-setting stage are carried out." It is at this stage that methods, programs, and strategies are developed with the aim of achieving the objectives.

It is important to note that the formulation of the National Policy did not occur in a linear fashion; rather, it was marked by both advances and setbacks in the fight against violence against women. However, as previously presented, the creation of the SPM led to significant progress,

creating expectations for the implementation of a participatory and inclusive policy with a bottom-up approach. This involved holding conferences and consulting with civil society across the three government levels to develop a National Policy for Combating Violence Against Women, taking into account local specificities and their main needs (Bugni, 2016).

Bugni (2016) adds that decision-making was defined by an incremental model, through effective dialogue between the government and civil society, in which the bottom-up approach was put into practice. This joint participation aimed to converge in defining objectives and methods for gender policies in Brazil.

Regarding the incremental model, championed by Charles Lindblom, it aims to solve problems gradually, without introducing major changes to already established situations or causing abrupt disruptions (Ruas, 2012).

Once the alternatives are defined, the decision-making phase of the policy process follows. As Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl (2013, p.157) emphasize, “it is the stage at which one or more, or none, of the options that were debated and examined during the previous two stages of the policy cycle are approved as the official course of action.” This does not mean, as Rua (2012) points out, that all decisions regarding the public policies to be implemented have been made, but that a common denominator regarding the core of the policy being formulated has been reached.

In formulating the National Policy for Combating Violence Against Women, the intention was to achieve broad reach across the various social contexts in which Brazilian women participate, taking into account racial, ethnic, generational, sexual orientation, disability, and social, economic, and regional integration issues (Campos *et al.*, 2009).

During the formulation process, some goals were defined and added to the National Pact for Combating Violence Against Women to be implemented at all three levels of government, including: building and improving services for women; training professionals across various fields; expanding the Women's Assistance Center – Call 180; encouraging innovative projects in areas such as income generation, education, and culture; publicizing national prevention and combat campaigns against violence; creating and implementing a database on violence; establishing the Maria da Penha Observatory; implementing



mandatory notification in all health services across the country; and, finally, assisting women who are victims of human trafficking (Brazil, 2011b).

In this context, the guiding principles for establishing actions to prevent and combat violence against women encompassed the effective participation of various sectors, represented by Public Security, the Judicial System, Social Assistance, and Primary Health Care.

Implementation

The implementation phase of public policies involves the effort, application of knowledge, and use of available resources (Howlett, Ramesh, Perl, 2013). In this regard, Rua (2012) points out that the decisions initially established move from the realm of intentions to being realized through intervention in reality.

The implementation of the National Policy was carried out, in particular, through the formation of networks, due to the possibility of providing comprehensive and humanized support to victims of violence. Thus, the network for combating violence against women began to operate in diverse areas such as culture, education, health, social assistance, public security, and justice, recognizing that it is a phenomenon of a multidimensional nature and with distinct demands.

However, it is noteworthy that some barriers are still encountered in the implementation of public policies for women victims of violence, such as the lack of expected commitment from states and municipalities regarding the provision of adequate services to victims. Cultural barriers also hinder the incorporation of these issues into political agendas, resulting in insufficient attention being given to the victims.

Another issue relates to designing a public policy to combat violence against women with a focus on different groups, such as families and children, without considering women exclusively as subjects with specific rights, needs, and demands. Additionally, there are real challenges in recognizing the diversity among women, who do not share a single origin or profile. This diversity demands public policies that address different realities and contexts, including the presence of

indigenous women, quilombolas¹⁴, lesbians, women from riverine communities, rural areas, and others.

The difficulties in communication among organizations that provide specialized services and work in a coordinated manner can impact the efficiency of addressing a complex, diffuse, and multi-causal phenomenon. Moreover, having a national database on violence against women still represents a challenge for obtaining an accurate understanding of the true extent of the problem (Brazil, 2011b).

In response to these challenges, there was a need to reformulate the strategies outlined in the Pacto, culminating in the launch of the “Woman: Living Without Violence” Program in 2013, through Decree Number 8.086, dated August 30, 2013. The goal was to improve the coordination of services within the network for women in situations of violence by strengthening and consolidating it and promoting financial autonomy (CDH, 2016).

It is observed that during the implementation process, due to the mentioned barriers, there was a need to reformulate the alternatives. This aligns with what is presented by various authors in the literature on public policies, which state that the policy cycle does not occur in a linear fashion. In reality, adjustments and modifications are necessary in response to the situations that arise in everyday life, which need to be addressed in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

Thus, the actions were predominantly focused on building and strengthening networks for assisting women in situations of violence, ensuring the enforcement of the Maria da Penha Law, establishing the Casa da Mulher Brasileira, training professionals in various fields, expanding the Service Center – Call 180 for victim reports against perpetrators, and conducting ongoing prevention and confrontation campaigns against gender-based violence (Brazil, 2011b)¹⁵.

In this interim, the Violence Against Women Policy and the Pact were designed to be developed not only by the Federal Government but also by States and Municipalities, taking into account the specific

¹⁴ The term “quilombola” refers to people who live in quilombos, communities historically formed by afro-descendants who escaped slavery and organized themselves in collective territories, preserving their cultural, social, and economic practices.

¹⁵ Own translation.



demands of each context. As Dias and Matos (2012) add, local governments enable greater agility in the implementation of public policies and serve as important vehicles for expanding state action, as they are closer to the community and can respond more quickly to its pressures compared to those that pass through the State or Federal levels.

Thus, the strategies of transversality, intersectorality, and capillarity gain prominence in the National Policy, addressing an action plan specified in the Pact that ensures actions are carried out, considering the multidimensional nature of violence against women (VAW).

Evaluation

According to Secchi (2010), evaluation represents the stage in the public policy cycle where the implementation process, the performance of the policy, and its capacity to reduce the problem it was designed to address are examined. The author adds that this is a crucial moment for producing feedback on the previous stages of the cycle.

Bugni (2016) emphasizes that for an effective evaluation of the violence against women (VAW) policy, it is necessary to collect, systematize, and publicize the data gathered, particularly from areas such as health and public safety, and from organizations like hospitals, health clinics, and police stations, which are often the entry points for women victims of violence. However, the collection and acquisition of this information remains a national issue.

The author notes that there have been significant advances. By the end of the first National Plan for Policies for Women (I PNPM), the Federal Government began conducting evaluations of policies for women. The Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM) became responsible for publishing a report at the end of each PNPM period, which includes information on the evaluation of processes and policy results. The creation of the Gender Equality Observatory in 2009 also marked progress in building a database, available online for consultation, containing information and studies produced and published periodically.

Two important sources have been crucial for building official statistics and composing the database on the map of violence against women in the country: the mandatory notification system for cases of violence against women, managed by the Ministry of Health, and the National Network that integrates information from the Public Security, Justice, and Oversight agencies (Infoseg), managed by the National Secretariat of Public Security/Ministry of Justice (Brazil, 2011 b). Currently, data is also disseminated by the Data Senate Research Institute in partnership with the Observatory of Women Against Violence (OMV), as well as other governmental bodies, such as the National Gender Violence Map and the Violence Atlas.

According to the 2016 Report by the Human Rights and Participatory Legislation Commission, the diagnosis of the gender situation after the implementation of the National Policy reveals the need for greater focus and targeted actions towards a specific layer of the population affected by violence, namely Black women. Data shows that they are more victimized compared to white women, highlighting a direct relationship between sexism and racism (CDH, 2016).

Another notable aspect is the reduction in investments directed towards the implementation of the policy. In 2020, the expenditure amounted to 38,2 million, representing only 29,45% of the authorized funds. Furthermore, during the period from 2020 to 2023, there was low allocation and reduced execution of the budget (INESC, 2023).

The report titled "Monitoring and Evaluation of Violence Against Women Prevention Policies – 2019/2020" outlines several actions needed to enhance public policies addressing violence against women. These actions include: expanding the reach and availability of specialized services; adapting services to meet the demands and realities of women's lives; and ensuring the accuracy and accessibility of data on violence to accurately assess the scope of the problem (OMV, 2021).

Despite significant normative advances, efforts to combat violence against women have progressively slowed. As Santos (2018) points out, there has been a growing tendency towards fragmentation in the fight against violence against women, particularly concerning the functioning of support networks. These networks suffer from inadequate attention from various levels of government and lack a coherent government agenda aligned with the work required to address women's needs.



Given Brazil's vast geography and the resulting cultural diversity, the outcomes of actions to combat violence against women have varied widely. This has led to both advances and setbacks, shaping the dynamics of care within the respective protection networks.

In the next section, the Casa das Mulheres Program and the Network for Assisting Women Victims of Violence in Viçosa-MG will be discussed. This will illustrate the implementation of the Public Policy for Combating Violence Against Women, developed by a municipal government in alignment with the decentralization and capillarity principles outlined in the policy.

Women's House Program and the Network for Women in Situations of Violence: The Role of NIEG/UFV

The ongoing manifestations of violence against women have sparked numerous discussions, not only within academic circles and institutions that have spaces dedicated to addressing gender inequalities and their consequences, but also across society as a whole, which has been confronted with unsustainable acts of male domination and violations of women's rights, including domestic, family, sexual, and psychological violence.

In this context, we can mention the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV), which houses the Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Estudos de Gênero (NIEG), an icon of work, actions, and research related to feminist and gender studies and their reflection on society. The NIEG addresses sensitive issues such as gender dimensions and the disorders that may arise from relationships based on sexism, homophobia, machismo, and patriarchy. As a result, its actions extend beyond the walls of the university through the development of the Programa Casa das Mulheres, which includes various projects such as Communication and Information, Database, Training and Capacity Building on gender issues, and Violence Against Women.

In this context, the Casa das Mulheres, in 2008, gained greater local visibility in the fight against domestic, familial, and sexual violence. By the following year, in 2009, efforts were made to establish the Non-Specialized Protective Network for Women in Situations of

Violence, through an initiative of the Municipal Council for the Rights of Women (CMDM), supported by UFV professors, public defenders, and community leaders (Rezende; Andrade, 2014). Thus, a relationship is established between the Casa das Mulheres and institutional actors, as well as with the group of women who are victims of violence.

A joint initiative for the formation of a network to support the fight against violence against women in the city of Viçosa was observed, aiming to provide integrated responses to victims. This involvement includes various organizations present in the municipality, such as: Public Defender's Office; Civil and Military Police Stations; Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS); Specialized Social Assistance Reference Center (CREAS); Family Health Strategy; Epidemiological Surveillance Service; São Sebastião and São João Batista Hospitals; UFV Division of Health; Municipal Council for the Rights of Women; Municipal Committees for Maternal Death Prevention (entitled to seats on the Council and Committee); Municipal Coordinating Body for Women's Public Policies; and City Council. This network enables intervention with different realities and target groups (NIEG, 2016).

Through funding from 2010 provided by the Ministry of Education's University Extension Program (PROEXT), the Casa das Mulheres began to direct its work in three distinct areas: training university students in Nursing, Law, Social Sciences, Pedagogy, and Psychology to assist victims; developing a database to reveal the map of violence against women in Viçosa-MG; and conducting training and mobilization activities with municipal partners, as well as those from the jurisdiction (Santos, 2013).

The creation of PET-Saúde was crucial for the construction of the violence map. PET-Saúde is a project conceived by NIEG and linked to the Epidemiological Surveillance of the Municipal Health Department, which enabled the notification of cases of violence against women (VAW) and facilitated the integration of data from other agencies, feeding the SINAN with notifications from the municipality of Viçosa. The development of the project was key in promoting the active search for information on VAW, relying on cooperation among the organizations responsible for providing services to women and that had identified some form of gender-related violence (Pinto, 2016).

In 2011, the Municipal Pact for Combating Violence Against Women was developed in response to the National Pact, which



encourages action at the municipal level. This led to the implementation of various actions, such as Debate Cycles, professional training for assisting women in situations of violence, and a seminar on the Maria da Penha Law, which took place in Viçosa between 2012 and 2013. At that time, discussions on VAW and its implications in society were rare. This prompted the mobilization of institutions and the active participation of authorities from the civil and military police, social assistance and health departments, public defenders, and others (Santos; Melo; Aguiar, 2014).

Pinto (2016) notes that in the years 2015 and 2016, the actions undertaken to combat VCM in Viçosa were marked by the visibility of the work carried out. This can be seen in the construction of the violence map, as previously mentioned, developed through the partnership between organizations, through active case search and their entry into the national system – SINAN – DATASUS. Due to the systematization of information, Viçosa ranked second in the state of Minas Gerais for the highest number of reported cases of domestic violence between 2009 and 2014.

The significant number of notifications drew attention from the Regional Office of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), the Subsecretariat for Women's Policies of the State of Minas Gerais, as well as the Regional Health Superintendence of Ponte Nova-MG. This served as a springboard for strengthening political articulations in the municipality, leading to the creation of important support bodies for combating violence, such as the Women's Policy Coordination, which is directly linked to the municipal executive (Pinto, 2016).

It is worth mentioning that the political articulations between the Casa das Mulheres and the CMDM facilitated the approval of Bill No. 091/2015 in the City Council of Viçosa. This bill established the creation of the Women's Public Policy Coordination and the Municipal Fund for Women's Rights. The Coordination was designed to support and monitor actions, programs, and projects focused on women, while the Fund was intended to ensure the necessary resources for implementing public policies on women's rights (NIEG, 2016).

Success was also achieved with the approval of the Municipal Protocol for the Care of Women in Situations of Violence, signed in 2015. A diagnosis was carried out, derived from nine meetings with representatives of the main institutions providing assistance to VCM.

These meetings were crucial for the development of material that would later serve as the basis for the Protocol's text (Santos; Melo; Aguiar, 2014). To secure its approval, a process of Popular Initiative took place in 2013, through a Public Hearing on VCM, which garnered the support of 3,000 voters from Viçosa, who signed a Bill that was subsequently presented to the City Council, securing it as a public protection policy (NIEG, 2016).

Thus, the CMDM, together with the Casa das Mulheres, in response to the violence indicators in Viçosa and its microregion and the reports of aggression, mobilized the institutions to work together in a network. The goal was to share the difficulties and challenges of the services provided, bringing the issue of addressing VCM to the public sphere (Santos; Melo; Aguiar, 2014).

In effect, the Women's Care Protocol not only represented the formalization of the non-specialized network of care for women in situations of violence in Viçosa but also served as an important document to define the responsibilities of each institution within the network. It outlines the role each institution must play and guides where women should be referred, considering each individual case. It should be emphasized that the protocol "not only establishes flows and procedures for guided care but also addresses violence from an educational perspective" (Santos; Melo; Aguiar, 2014, p.8-9). The aim is to strengthen dialogue between organizations and prioritize humanized care for women victims of violence, with the goal of preventing re-victimization.

Despite the progress made in developing support services for victims of violence in Viçosa, which have been established in the city with the creation of a public policy for women's protection, setbacks on various fronts due to resource limitations raise concerns about the continuation of these efforts. The actions depend on the uncertainty and unpredictability of public resources.

Thus, the establishment of a network focused on service delivery and based on intersectoral collaboration, as outlined in official documents such as the "Network for Combating Violence Against Women" from the Federal Government, faces difficulties in being realized in practice. It operates within the constraints of available infrastructure, financial resources, and the involvement of professionals, as well as the willingness of public authorities to collaborate.



Conclusions

The fight against violence against women remains a significant challenge for both public authorities and society as a whole. Despite many advances, such as the empowerment of women, recognition of their professional competence, the creation of spaces for discussing gender inequalities, particularly within academic institutions, and efforts to combat discrimination and domestic violence, women still face daily struggles with sexism and “machismo¹⁶”. Consequently, they encounter violence in various areas of their lives, including family, religious, and professional environments. Thus, changes and constants coexist simultaneously in daily life.

However, it is important not to discredit or deny the achievements made so far, such as the recognition that acts of violence against women cannot remain confined to the private sphere but must be reported and punished specifically. There is an understanding that this is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and, therefore, requires distinct services to support women who are victims of violence. As a result, the consolidation of the National Policy for Combating Violence Against Women allows for the creation of networks that can address demands more comprehensively, ensuring that women are not re-victimized in the various contexts of their social lives.

It should be emphasized that the demands of feminist and women's movements have resonated within society, highlighting the detrimental effects of gender inequality, which, in addition to causing various disturbances, still sees constant manifestations of violence against women. Educational institutions, particularly universities, have also contributed to questioning this inequality between women and men. Numerous research groups and centers, such as NIEG/UFV, with the engagement of students and faculty, have developed extension projects that bring alternative solutions and possibilities into the discussion arena, such as the formation of the Support Network in Viçosa and the public policy of protection to address violence against women.

¹⁶ Machismo can be understood as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors present in social relations that favor men over women, reinforcing the idea of male superiority and justifying power inequalities between the genders.

Despite the long journey still ahead, the approval and implementation of public policies have enabled the fight against violence against women and the implementation of actions at all three levels of government. However, there is a need to inform the population about legislative measures that guarantee access to justice and the right of women to be the protagonists of their own lives.

It is also important to emphasize the need for increased investment in evaluations of the policy's progress at all levels—federal, state, and municipal. For example, Viçosa has faced difficulties sustaining its efforts. This investment is crucial for ensuring new achievements and for addressing any violations of women's rights.

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Políticas públicas voltadas ao enfrentamento da violência contra à mulher no Brasil: um estudo de caso

RESUMO: Com objetivo de apresentar o ciclo da Política Nacional de Enfrentamento a Violência contra as Mulheres no Brasil, utilizou-se de pesquisa documental e revisão bibliográfica, sobre o panorama dos principais avanços obtidos e os desdobramentos dessa política no meio social. Deve-se destacar o protagonismo das instituições de ensino, em que se concentram núcleos e grupos de pesquisa e de extensão, como o Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Estudo de Gênero da Universidade Federal de Viçosa (NIEG/UFV), que por meio do Programa Casa das Mulheres, concretizou a consolidação da Rede de Atendimento às Mulheres em Situação de Violência, ao apresentar alternativas e possibilidades frente à violência. Apesar do caminho que ainda é necessário percorrer, a aprovação e implementação de políticas públicas têm possibilitado o enfrentamento da violência contra às mulheres, com a concretização das ações nas três esferas governamentais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ciclo de políticas públicas. Violência contra a mulher. Programa Casa das Mulheres.

Palloma ROSA FERREIRA, Universidade Federal de Tocantins

Graduada em Gestão de Cooperativas, pela Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV), Mestre em Extensão Rural também pela UFV e Doutorado em Economia Doméstica/UFV. É membro do Grupo de Pesquisa Desenvolvimento Humano, Social e Vida Cotidiana. Atualmente atua como pesquisadora, cursando Pós-Doutorado no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Regional (PPGDR), pela Universidade Federal de Tocantins (UFT).



**Diego NEVES DE SOUSA, Embrapa Pesca e Aquicultura/Analista
de Transferência de Tecnologia**

Pós-doutor do Programa em Propriedade Intelectual e Transferência de Tecnologia para a Inovação (UFT), doutor em desenvolvimento rural (UFRGS), mestre em extensão rural (UFV), gestor de cooperativas (UFV) e sociólogo (UNIP). Atuo nos processos de transferência de tecnologia, no desenvolvimento tecnológico, na elaboração de planos de marketing e de comunicação, além de estudos prospectivos/socioeconômicos e na extensão inovadora conduzidos pela Embrapa Pesca e Aquicultura relacionados aos temas: pesca e aquicultura; sistemas agrícolas integrados; alimentação; desenvolvimento rural e regional; políticas públicas da agricultura familiar; extensão rural, pesqueira e aquícola; inovação social e inclusão produtiva para os atores do meio rural. Bolsista de Produtividade Desen. Tec. e Extensão Inovadora do CNPq - Nível 2

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