

# EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS



**marta**

2014

The leading organization advocating for women's rights in Latvia, MARTA plays an important role in promoting women's rights, seeking out the world's best in class practice, taking part in decision making in Europe and capacity building work in Central Asia.

Competence, consistency, coherence, emotionally impactful experience and responsible mission are at the core of MARTA's activities.

MARTA's trademarks are support and advocacy, ambition and unambiguous standpoint. Reflection and action provide the balance to MARTA's day-to-day work.

2014 was a success for MARTA thanks to its team of professionals, supporters, opponents, contributors and donors.

## **WHO WE HELPED**

### CONSULTATIONS:

In 2014, Resource Centre for Women MARTA provided assistance to 396 women. 286 were first-time assistance seekers. In addition, MARTA also helped 16 children suffering from direct or indirect abuse and violence.

Type of assistance	Individuals served
Social worker consultation	1181 (in person and by phone/email)
Lawyer: Legal consultation	925
Lawyer: Legal assistance to women suffering from abuse	155
Psychologist consultation	364
Psychotherapist consultation	248

Children suffering from abuse and violence have been provided targeted support, including assistance by social worker, child psychologist, child psychotherapist and lawyer.

## SUPPORT GROUP SESSIONS AND INFO HOTLINE

In 2014, Resource Centre for Women MARTA held 30 support group sessions for women survivors of abuse and domestic violence as well as for women whose children have suffered abuse and domestic violence.

In 2014, the centre received 155 calls to its help line, of which:

- 83 calls concerned domestic abuse,
- 8 calls were about cases of human trafficking and risks involved,
- 64 calls regarded a variety of issues, including divorce proceedings, [temporary protection measures against spousal violence](#), aliments, custody of children, protection in case of unregistered partnership, workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

*Asylum seekers from Ukraine have also made several calls.*

*Important!*

Whilst seeking assistance and support, victims of sexual exploitation reported abuse by the police force, including physical and sexual abuse, violence and inadequate fines.

MARTA aims to investigate these claims in the coming year.

## **RESULTS! WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED:**

### **NEW LEGISLATION PROTECTING WOMEN IN VIOLENT SITUATIONS**

For ten years, MARTA has been working with partner organizations and lobbied government officials to adopt legislation to protect women from violence.

The 2014 report by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights „Violence against women: An EU wide survey” uncovers the fact that 39% of Latvian women aged 15 and older have suffered from physical or sexual abuse. In Latvia, every day 115 women suffer from domestic abuse by her partner or spouse.

On 31st March 2014, several laws were amended to include a new section on „Temporary protection against violence”, which provides a comprehensive legal mechanism to guarantee temporary protection for individuals, fleeing any type of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence, coercion or control.

**Latvia was the last EU Member State to adopt these regulations.**

The amendments of the Civil Procedure Law, Law on Police, Children’s Rights Protection Law, Criminal Code and Law on Orphan’s Courts allows a victim of violence or stalking to file for a temporary protection order and restraining order against the perpetrator. The victim may file the request directly or with the assistance of the police.

The court may issue restraining orders that include the following provisions:

- Eviction provision (perpetrator must move out of shared home)

- Stay away provision (perpetrator must keep court-decided distance)
- No contact provision (perpetrator is not allowed to contact victim)

**This amendment empowers women, because law enforcement can act only when** a woman herself has made the decision to leave and oppose the abusing partner. In order to encourage women to do so, however, societal support is essential.

### BUILDING SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE LAW

MARTA's experience has shown that so far, the temporary protection order functions well. However, previous experience has shown that the success of implementation depends much on responsible, timely, and well-coordinated action by all involved institutions.

To develop and strengthen cooperation among institutions as well as to create a comprehensive support system for female victims of abuse and domestic violence, MARTA worked with the Ministry of Welfare, Association of Family Doctors, Welfare Department of Riga municipality and State Police to hold number of seminars on the new amendments for policemen, social workers, Custody Court experts and general practitioners.

### FIGHTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE

#### HIGHLIGHTING VULNERABILITY

More than 80% of all human trafficking victims have suffered from sexual exploitation.

The drawn-out political debate in Latvia on prostitution as one of the worst forms of human trafficking has only confirmed the need for well-defined and policy-based concepts. MARTA highlighted the case of women and girls who, due to various circumstances, are left vulnerable and prone to exploitation by organized crime.

Public campaigns and MARTA's active participation in working groups within the Ministry of the Interior and Parliament have led to Criminal Code amendments. The definition of "human trafficking" now also includes concept of vulnerability, which significantly helps with identifying the victims of human trafficking.



**YOU, TOO, MAY BE HURT:** This message was strategically placed in public transport to educate society that human trafficking affects us all.

#### EXITING PROSTITUTION: FOCUS ON VICTIM SUPPORT

In 2014, MARTA took part in a roundtable on victim-need-based approach in the fight against human trafficking attended also by members of law enforcement, state officials, academics and NGO representatives from Latvia, Estonia and the UK.

The exchange of experience and good practices based on victim-centred and need-based approaches between partner organizations was especially beneficial. Program for exiting prostitution, identification of victims, the responsibility of state institutions were among the most important discussion topics. Effective exiting program implementation in Latvia is currently hindered by political positioning. State representatives do not recognize the direct link between prostitution and human trafficking, nor the concept of vulnerability as a common key factor in the recruitment process.

## EKONOMISLKIE APSTĀKĻI

"Izņemot marmora dzēriņus, mums uzmanību nepievērta, ātrās ēdiena nebija sapņots...  
Naudas nekad nebija, rotaļlietu nebija,  
gājām uz skolu kā nepilnie bērni.  
Vienmēr domāju – kaut izbaudītu, man būtu  
viss, un es būtu nepatērīga!"

### nabadzība **parādi**

zema statusa darbs matēriju izstrādātāja māksliniece

### atbildības sajūta par bērniem/ģimeni

ģimenes locekļu parādi vīra parādi zema mācītāja

### pamatvajadzību apmierināšana

nepilnā atkarība apmierinātā alkohols, narkotikas

labas vajadzības apmierināšana

### bezdarbs

mājokļa zaudēšana

## SOCIĀLIE APSTĀKĻI

### trūkst atbalsta

sociāli atstumšana atbilstošs trūkums

### sociālā atstumšana

nabadzība niekas aprūpē

narkotikas trūkst spēju investēt atbilstoši

atkarība no vīrieša alkohols

### alkohols

ģimenes atbilstošs trūkums

## PERSONĪGIE APSTĀKĻI

iegūstības trūkums

### smaga krīze

ģimenes vajadzības atbilstošs trūkums

### vīra parādi

## PSIHOLOĢISKIE APSTĀKĻI

sociālā atstumšana bulings

vardarbības sekas

pašcieņas trūkums revālcība

### zems pašvērtējums

nevērīga, viesa attieksme bērībā

### atkarība no vīrieša

mentālo atbilstošo

## KULTŪRAS APSTĀKĻI

"Man iekās, ka es jau no pašas  
bērības zināju, visur, kur es skatījos,  
visur bija sekss pielietots. Es no pašas  
bērības zināju, ka ar seksu var daudz  
ko panākt, ka tu ļauj sev daudz ko  
nodarīt, ar to var vis kaut ko panākt."

### sievietes

### objektīvizācija

sievietes vērtība = vīrieša klātesamība

### draugu ietekme

## ĢIMENES APSTĀKĻI

"parasto, laimīgu padomju  
bērnu bērība" vai "ja mums  
bija cepti kartupeļi ar maizi –  
tā bija svētlaimē!"

### bulings

pieaugušo bulings

savstarpējā bulings

vardarbība bulings

bērībā sociālā atstumšana bulings

vardarbība pret bērniem bulings

"sievietes lēmums iesaistīties prostitūcijā nav mirkļa impulss vai pašmērķis.

Zināmu laiku viņa cenšas situāciju atrisināt sociāli pieņemamā veidā. Kad tas neizdodas,

iesaistišanās prostitūcijā kļūst par **pēdējo līdzekli** situācijas glābšanai"

## EDUCATING OFFICIALS: STOP Blaming the Victim.

One of the most shocking examples of institutional ignorance condemned by Latvian society and social media was the statement by General Prosecutor's office, blaming women in some cases of rape.

During the Legal Affairs parliamentary committee debate on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014, prosecutor Ms. Elita Jurkjāne stated that *"in certain cases of rape, it is difficult to call it rape because in these situations the victim is very much to blame for what has happened to her"*.

Further to these statements, MARTA requested for the professional competencies of the prosecutor to be evaluated. In response, the Office of General Prosecutor replied that *"there are some cases of rape, when the victims have encouraged the crime against them through exhibitionist behaviour or jointly drinking alcohol, which has led to the rape."*

MARTA has asked the Office of General Prosecutor to retract these statements. This stance of state officials is unacceptable and contradicts a number of international human rights documents.

The General Prosecutor Mr. Ēriks Kalnmeiers did not take responsibility for the statements and refused to talk to media. In his letter to MARTA he stated that *"in democratic society everyone has a right to have an opinion, including prosecutors"*.

Facing fierce opposition from state representatives, MARTA turned to social media to generate support for its position. An independent initiative was created by supporters through the website [www.avaaz.com](http://www.avaaz.com) that encouraged individuals to sign a petition demanding General Prosecutor's Office to stop victim blaming.

[Didzis Melbiksis @didzis\\_m](#)

A woman was raped. "She was indiscreet", because she had a glass of champagne and winked at a man. Really?

[https://twitter.com/gvaldmanis/status/471974979647844354 ...](https://twitter.com/gvaldmanis/status/471974979647844354)

[2:58 PM - 29 May 2014](#)

[liana\\_langa @liana\\_langa](#)

[@centrsmarta](#) That is truly shocking! Thank you for trying to solve the matter and publicizing the level of „understanding” by the General Prosecutor

[6:01 PM - 28 May 2014 Roja, Latvia](#)

## EDUCATING SOCIETY: Speaking Out For Women. Against Violence.

On 10th December – International Human Rights Day, MARTA launched a PR campaign with local male celebrities expressing their views on women's rights and condemning violence against women. The campaign's aim was to raise overall awareness of women's rights as an essential part of human rights.

### **#BE A MAN**

*„If a man uses violence against a woman for his own benefit or to take advantage of her just to prove his own superiority or comfort his ego, he is not a respectable man”, Sandis Ozoliņš, hockey player.*

*„If you want to be free, make sure that the other person is free too”, Ilmārs Šlāpins, main editor of online magazine satori.lv*

*„Stand in favour of gender equality. Be a man, don't be a mistake”, Vents Sīlis, philosopher*



AR ŪSĀM NEPIETIEK

#EsiVecis



**A moustache is not enough: #BeAMan**

## POLITICIANS SPEAK: What needs to be done in Latvia?

In advance of Latvian parliamentary elections of 2014, MARTA contacted 300 MP candidates and tried to reach another 856 candidates through political party information centres. To find out MP candidates' values, knowledge and overall views on important topics in Latvian society regarding family, sexual education and human trafficking, MARTA asked candidates a simple question: "what needs to be done in Latvia (in terms of women's rights and empowerment)?" MARTA received 89 answers.

The responses made clear the connections between the projects MARTA has developed in legislation, social media outreach, and education. This quotation in particular shows the connections on a local level in daily life:

*„In my line of work, more and more frequently I face cases of STD or early teenage pregnancies (at age of 14). Currently, we have registered 3 underage (under 18) pregnancies. We need to renew health studies in schools or at least dedicate more time to sex education in biology or social health classes. Current lack of knowledge allows and fosters youth “recruitment for prostitution”, which often results in enslavement and human trafficking”.*  
Observed an MP candidate, general practitioner from Latvian countryside.

In the questionnaires posed to MP candidates, MARTA also included several public statements by various politicians on women's rights, family and human trafficking. However, none of the quoted politicians replied to MARTA's questionnaire and, thus, did not provide any justification for their own arguments.

## INVESTING IN FUTURE: MARTA'S WORK WITH YOUTH

Social media have become a space where sexual violence is widely present. MARTA has launched several activities aimed at youth to address this problem.

## HATE SPEECH IS NO JOKE

The 2012 report of the European Council states that 78% of youth have experienced hate speech on the Internet or in social media. Almost half of them have been direct victims of hate speech.

Hate crimes and hate speech on the Internet are common, often appearing in the shape of comments. The misuse of freedom of speech and the right to express one's opinion often creates situations, where commentators encourage and promote hate speech.

## LIMITS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH

More and more frequently statements against woman's dignity, incitement of violence against women or threats of physical and sexual abuse appear on the Internet or in social media.



A woman is not a sex, it is a breed.



Rudzītis is right, half-demented girls, whose parents didn't spank them, the failures of our educational system, are overflowing embassies with pleas to save them!



Eew, why don't I have the intellect and the desire to philosophize. Because I am a woman.



A girl's profile states: Christmas tree ready to be taken home. What, is she f\*\*\* with an axe? #prostitute #holelargerthanmouth

MARTA encouraged people to protest against hate speech—press the TWITTER Report button!

## STOP SEXUAL BULLYING

Together with the University of Leeds and other European partner organisations, MARTA took part in the creation of a new intervention programme targeting cases of sexual bullying or harassment in schools.

The new intervention programme “ACT Pack: awareness, cooperation and tackling to stop sexual bullying” will help in strengthening self-confidence of 13 to 18 year old youth experiencing sexual bullying. The program’s underlying principle is to encourage peer-to-peer engagement.

The programme provides guidelines for workshops led by one adult and two young people, as well as training courses for leaders of these workshops, with particular focus on the following subjects:

- Awareness of sexual bullying
- Gender and sexuality
- Sexting
- Effects of sexual bullying
- Tackling sexual bullying

Valuable activities, video links and explanations are included as well as useful advice on how to choose leaders for workshops and how to improve the emotional environment in the schools. A list for further readings on the subject matter has also been made available.

The guidelines are freely available on: [www.asbae.eu](http://www.asbae.eu)

In 2014 MARTA trained the first leaders of the workshops (5 adults and 12 young people).

MARTA has started a variety of activities in many schools in Latvia in hope of decreasing sexual bullying in schools, raising awareness and promoting the ACT guide.

## YOUTH AND THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERS

Currently MARTA has sixteen active volunteers.

### **„The Personal is Political”**

Alīna Apine, volunteer,

*“When I was growing up, I often got tired of the cultivated image of fragile princess, as women around me were completely different – powerful, capable, inspiring and strong. I believe that the more women realise their own potential and strength, the more equal, strong and well-off society becomes. Traditional concepts about the role of the woman are old fashioned. If we choose development and well being, it is highly important to encourage individual thinking. It must be said that current political “games” are not attractive, although all parties often claim a willingness to change status quo. It almost seems that anyone entering politics, must part from his or her ideals and that each compromise decreases chance to make real change.*

*Civil society for me has always been the right place where ideals and rebellion are not mutually exclusive, but exist in harmony. Each one of us has a way in which we define ourselves or at least we are all in the search of our own place in the society. My identity as a woman is very important and the volunteering work helps to transform my personal identity into a political one.*

*MARTA represents values important to me and helps women, whose voice is absent from public space. MARTA creates an environment, where every conversation and every step helps moving forward and contributing to the history, showing how small changes eventually lead to big shifts in the society. To be part of the process is damn well pleasing! In 1969 Carol Hanisch stated that “personal is political”. This statement has become close to my heart. Come and work with MARTA!”*

### **Kristīne Vītola, volunteer at MARTA:**

*„Going through written replies of MP candidates allowed me to understand and evaluate the different positions of politicians and political parties, as well as crystallised the stance of different political movements. I learned more about violence against women, human trafficking and everyday sexism in Latvia.”*

## **STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

### **COOPERATION PROJECTS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

MARTA continues the work to promote women's rights in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The main priority at this time is to ensure sustainability of support provided to women across these countries.

In Uzbekistan, MARTA:

- strengthened the work and development of women's support organizations by providing professional support to the specialists working with vulnerable women
- created networking opportunities with international partners
- established a plan for future cooperation with Uzbekistan's Women's Committee

In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, MARTA:

- cooperation projects aimed at strengthening the capacities of local administration and NGOs have provided the impetus for local civil society to advocate for women's rights and take a stand against violence in society
- contributed to the creation of helplines for women
- participated in a conference in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, where the heads of regional governments, experts and civil society representatives from Osh and Khujand, Tajikistan met to discuss a variety of social issues in both regions:
  1. early marriage,
  2. education
  3. equal opportunities for children from lower socioeconomic classes
  4. vulnerability of women from rural areas
  5. establishment of kindergarten facilities.

### **PROJECTS WITH NORDIC COUNTRIES**

#### **SEVEN to Riga**



In cooperation with Embassy of Sweden in Latvia and as part of events held to welcome the royal couple of Sweden to Latvia, MARTA staged the contemporary play “Seven” in Riga. The premier was attended by Queen Silvia and introduced by Dr. Vaira Vīķe – Freiberga, former president of Latvia from 1999-2007.

Seven is a documentary play about seven women, their courage to change their lives and overcome traditional stereotypes. It is an incredible manifestation of democracy values and human rights from a gender perspective. The play has been brought to stages all around the world. In Latvia, the play was produced in cooperation with Swedish institute in Latvia and the Embassy of Sweden to Latvia.

A variety of celebrities and media profiles in Latvia, amongst them politicians, artists and society figures, took the roles of seven different women. The play was produced by Swedish actor and consultant Hedda Krausz Sjögren and Latvian producer Laura Groza – Ķibere.



The Ambassador of Sweden in Latvia, H.E. Mr. Henrik Landerholm, commented on the societal significance of the play:

*"Violence against women remains a topical and controversial issue in many countries of the world. I hope this theatre play will serve as encouragement for new exchanges of opinion regarding this and many other topical society-related issues."*

**FORUM: Women's Rights Parade.**



MARTA represented Latvia in the third Forum of Nordic countries in Malmö (Sweden), which gathered more than 20,000 participants from Nordic countries, Baltic States and Russia. Nordic government representatives and members of international institutions were amongst the participants.

During the meeting, questions of gender equality and women's rights in relation to science, different religions, media, culture, education, security, politics, military conflict, privacy and personal freedoms were put forward for the debate.

During the Forum, MARTA staff members shared their experiences of working with boys and girls on understanding of traditional gender roles and ways to minimise gender-based violence.

## Financial support

In 2014, ideas, values and work by MARTA was supported by the State of Latvia, the branch of Nordea Bank AB in Latvia, the Railway of Latvia, SIA „AVON Cosmetics”, SIA „Madara Cosmetics”, SIA „BITE LATVIJA”, SIA „Stockmann”, *airBaltic*, Equality Now, Ruth Turner Foundation, Finlands Svenska Marthaforbund, Oppna Forskolan Sala (Sweden), Venner AV Martasenteret, Fellesorganisasjonen (Norway), individual supporters and supporters via website Ziedot.lv and Donor Direct Action, as well as the Embassy of the Netherlands in Latvia, the Embassy of Sweden in Latvia, the Embassy of Finland in Latvia, the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Latvia and the Embassy of the United States in Latvia.

In 2014, MARTA participated and was financially supported in the framework of the following projects:

1. Foundation Open Society Institute project „Save Yourself. Stop the Violence”.
2. World Childhood Foundation project „Zero tolerance for Child Abuse”.
3. EC programme Prevention of and Fight against crime (ISEC), project „A Safety Compass – signposting ways to escape trafficking”.
4. EC programme Daphne III project “Addressing Sexual Bullying in Europe”.
5. EC programme Daphne III project „Empowering women to fight against domestic violence through integrated training, support and counselling/ WOM-POWER”.
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, project “Capacity building of Civil Society and Local Public Administration in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by applying participatory research methods”.
7. Hedda Produktion AB, the Swedish Institute project „SEVEN in Latvia”.
8. U.S. government, project in support of the training of policemen, judges and social workers “Best practices when working with domestic abuse cases”.
9. Embassy of the Netherlands in Latvia, project “Gender Equality in Youth Work: Empowering the Baltics”.
10. Community of Democracies CD-UNITED Co-Financing Initiative project “Capacity building for Civil Society and Local Public Administration in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan”.