

StoP© Profile

Preventing Violence against Women - StoP©

Initiating sustainable change, closing gaps in the support system

About StoP©?

StoP is a scientifically based and practically tested model for prevention and intervention in cases of domestic violence, with a focus on violence against women (= anyone defining themselves or/and are perceived as a woman). It focuses on the local level, on people in neighbourhoods and their potential to provide help and ensure lasting change.

Studies show: Violence against women remains at high levels. Every third day a woman in Germany is killed by her partner or ex-partner (BKA 2022). Many queer people are also affected. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Studies also show: Investing in prevention on the ground, where the violence happens, reduces human suffering and saves money in the long run. An informed, empowered neighbourhood reduces femicide, reduces violence and promotes equality in relationships, as international research shows. This is what StoP is all about!

The StoP concept was developed by Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand at the University of Applied Sciences in 2006. It is based, among other things, on her many years of practical experience in women's shelters and community work.

There are about 55 neighbourhoods/cities/villages in Germany and Austria that use the StoP 8-step concept. This action model shows ways to achieve local publicity, sustainable changes in awareness and behaviour, activation of civic engagement, recruitment of local multipliers and creation of supportive social networks in neighbourhoods. This is based on the training of appropriate experts and the establishment of active StoP neighbourhood groups.

Local StoP projects and the concept itself have received numerous awards in Germany and Austria (Citizen's Award, Innovation Award), and Sabine Stövesand was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit for StoP by Germany's President in 2024.

AUTHOR: Sabine Stövesand

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The benefits of neighbourhoods/local communities

Violence against women is not decreasing despite the positive changes that have taken place over the last 40 years (support system, gender equality, work with perpetrators, changes in the law). This violence violates fundamental and human rights and affects everyone.

It happens in specific places that do not exist in a vacuum. To this day, many of those affected do not talk about it and feel ashamed. However, their social environment often knows about it. Friends, neighbours and work colleagues suspect, hear or see something, but don't know what to do. People often listen and look the other way. Social norms, prejudices, excessive demands, but also fear play an important role. The StoP Concept© offers alternatives with an eight-step action model.

The StoP© Model

1. Getting started: The first step is a firm commitment from a community or organization to make StoP happen, by deciding to mobilize resources, find and provide staff (StoP-trained community organizers), space and funding for the work. StoP needs a two-year start-up period, after which the work can really bear fruit. So, it needs funding for at least 5 years. Change takes time, especially in this area.

The municipality or local organization should provide suitable staff, contact StoP e.V. and agree to participate in a StoP training course, with subsequent permission to use the concept, logo and many materials, as well as access to the StoP website.

Two staff positions, training and outreach materials and administrative costs are required. Alternative: Interested parties from social institutions, NGOs, public authorities and equal opportunities offices attend the StoP training course first to get an idea, acquire expertise and be able to start immediately after clarifying the funding.

2. Community assessment: In the second step, the StoP-organizers systematically explore the community, identifying and talking to key people and local leaders.

3. Organizing: The third step involves engaging community members, building relationships and a consistent community group, raising awareness, defining a shared vision, developing skills and preparing for action.

4. Action: The fourth step is for the group to create local campaigns and open public spaces to learn and talk about violence against women, the change the community wants, how to get there, to support survivors.

5. Networking: The fifth step is to put the issue of domestic violence on the agenda of community stakeholders and to establish cooperation at the district level.

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6. Support: The sixth step is to be prepared to offer individual support to survivors and to establish links to the professional support system, such as counselling services and shelters.

7. Sustainability: The seventh step is to do ongoing, reliable small-scale relationship-building, organizing and change work involving more people and institutions in the community.

8. Expansion: The eighth step is to join networks, build political alliances and support for our cause beyond the local community.

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