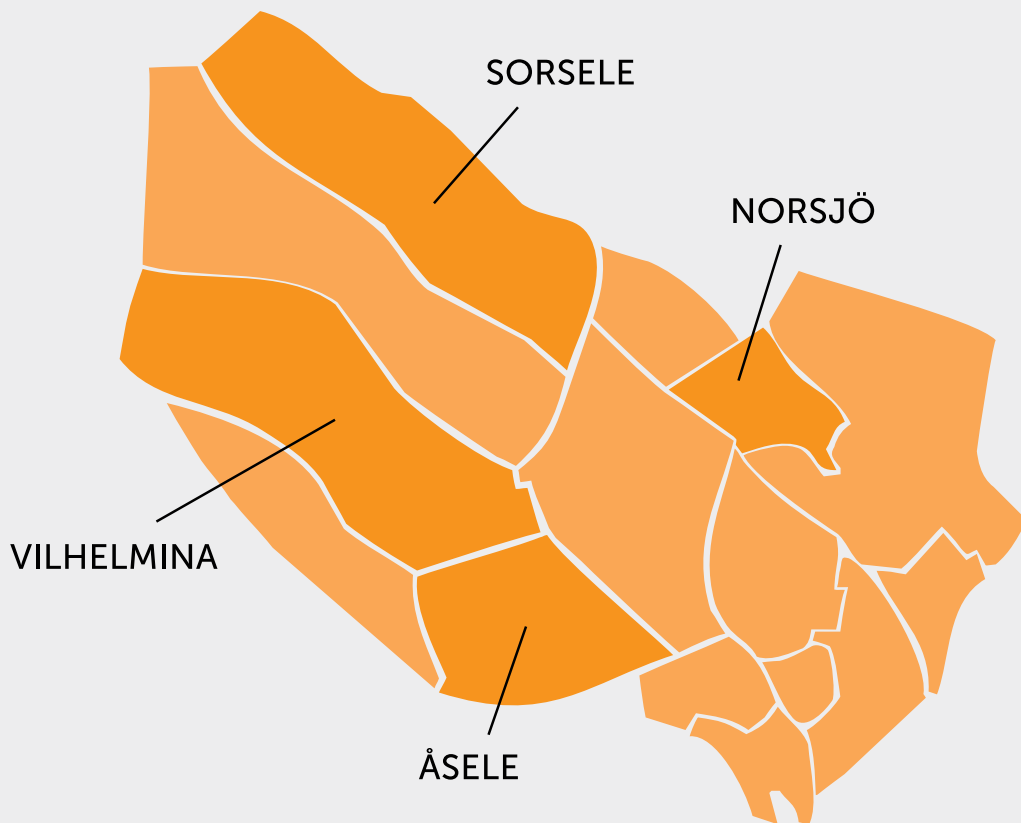




Länsstyrelsen
Västerbotten

Violence Prevention Västerbotten

A violence prevention initiative using a gender transformative approach in small municipalities



Klabböle Konsult and Klyo AB have evaluated the initiative Violence Prevention Västerbotten on behalf of the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten. This external evaluation followed the initiative for a limited period of time, from September 2018 until April 2020. In parallel with the evaluation, the County Administrative Board and participating municipalities have also jointly evaluated and developed the work. Lessons have been learned along the way and these have been integrated into the ongoing support provided to municipalities and are also presented in this summary.

Title: Violence Prevention Västerbotten: A violence prevention initiative using a gender transformative approach in small municipalities

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Foreword

Since 2018, the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten has been working on an initiative called Violence Prevention Västerbotten in partnership with the municipalities Norsjö, Sorsele, Vilhelmina and Åsele and the non-governmental organisation MÄN, a coalition of men for gender equality, against violence and for redefining masculinity. The Swedish Police Authority has also been involved in the project. Adopting a process-oriented and gender transformative approach has proved instructive, providing many new insights into how collaboration and support can be built up across the county and the necessary conditions for such work, but also what can and must be improved and developed. What can be said, is that without the major, important decisions that have been and continue to be taken by the four municipalities since the beginning of 2018, it would not have been possible to implement Violence Prevention Västerbotten.

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1. Background

County administrative boards have had government assignments in the policy area gender equality since 1995 and, since 2004, the specific task of combating and preventing men's violence against women and supporting organisations that encounter the victims of such violence. The overall guiding objective of Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men, girls and boys, should have the same opportunities to shape society and their own lives. The current assignment of county administrative boards with regard to policy sub-goal 6, that men's violence against women must stop, emphasises that prerequisites for achieving that sub-goal include effective preventive measures and more constructive involvement from men and boys, as well as a reckoning with gender-stereotypical norms that justify violence and restrict women's and girls' freedom of action and life choices. Efforts to prevent and combat men's violence against women are also highlighted as a prerequisite for achieving the goals of gender equality and are part of the gender mainstreaming strategy adopted by the Government.¹

In 2017, the Government also tasked county administrative boards with establishing regional coordinators to support the development of effective, knowledge-based crime prevention initiatives at regional and local level. The purpose of the Government's national crime prevention programme *Combating Crime Together* is to create the conditions for structured and long-term crime prevention work in the whole of society. As well as combating crime, the programme emphasises the need to develop collaboration at regional and local levels.² The point of departure for crime prevention measures is specific local problems.

In 2017, the situation in small municipalities in Västerbotten was that there was generally a small increase in violent crime, with a larger increase in individual municipalities, this taking into account unreported crimes that do not appear in statistics, especially crimes where the perpetrator and victim are acquainted or in a relationship. With regard to men's violence against women, including domestic violence, the County Administrative Board has not noted any reduction in the region. The Swedish Crime Survey reports an increase in fear of crime, with women experiencing a greater sense of insecurity than men.

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- 1 cf. <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/vasterbotten.html> and <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/skrivelse/2016/11/skr.-20161710/>, where the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women is presented in full. County administrative boards' assignment relating to sub-goal 6: <https://www.regeringskansliet.se/regeringsuppdrag/2017/12/regionalt-uppdrag-att-forebygga-och-bekampa-mans-vald-mot-kvinnor/>
 - 2 www.regeringen.se/tillsammansmotbrott and <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/vasterbotten/samhalle/social-hallbarhet/brottsforebyggande-arbete.html>

While it can be generally stated that violence is a very significant societal problem entailing enormous financial costs, above all it creates extensive, often long-term suffering for both children and women. Regardless of the profile of the victim, men are greatly overrepresented among perpetrators in crime statistics, something that must be addressed, especially in how preventive work is targeted. It is society's responsibility to prevent violence and only our combined efforts will suffice.

One of the factors underlying the initiative is therefore to develop inter-sectoral collaboration on issues related to violence prevention and gender, both internally at the County Administrative Board and externally in municipalities. There was also a realisation that there is both a need and potential for even more offensive preventive measures, and that this can be achieved by combining the mapping of crime in each municipality by the County Administrative Board, the Swedish Police Authority and the municipalities themselves as it relates to the prevention of violence, with the ambition of working together rather than in entirely separate processes.

Selection criteria and working methods

The County Administrative Board has chosen to direct its efforts at small rural municipalities where local crime problems have been thoroughly mapped in collaboration between the municipality and the local police district, with active prevention groups/teams and designated violence-against-women coordinators and/or gender equality managers, all of which are important functions in this initiative. The selected municipalities have also appointed crime prevention coordinators who have demonstrated enormous commitment to not only crime-prevention but also safety-creating measures, and who have broad knowledge of the local situation. The Police Authority has been involved in the initiative through the work of police officers in the municipalities and participation in training, as well as through its own training initiatives.

Pursuant to its assignment, the work of the County Administrative Board shall be based on knowledge of local problem scenarios, making mapping of the local situation crucial to offering adequate support and measures. Crime prevention councils are deemed to function as operational hubs for taking a gender transformative approach to violence prevention and systematically revealing and analysing men's violence against women as a gender equality problem, and subsequently developing initiatives and working methods within their routine operations to contribute to reducing the incidence of violence.

No Reason to Wait

The handbook *Inget att vänta på* [No Reason to Wait] describes how violence prevention efforts can be coordinated, systematised and based on knowledge. The emphasis is on the long-term prevention of men's violence against women, including domestic violence, honour-related violence and

oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The handbook takes a five-step approach to change based on the World Health Organization's development work on violence prevention. The handbook was prepared by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society and the NGOs MÄN and Unizon and was subsequently updated in 2019 by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, work that included a reference group with representatives from county administrative boards. Violence Prevention Västerbotten began working with the earlier edition of the handbook but also uses and disseminates the revised edition in which Västerbotten is highlighted as a good example.³

A Municipality Free from Violence

Financed by the Swedish Inheritance Fund, *En kommun fri från våld* [A Municipality Free from Violence] was managed by the NGO MÄN between 2015 and 2018 as a pilot project to assess how the *Inget att vänta på* handbook works in a Swedish context.⁴ The project was implemented in collaboration with trial municipalities Borås and Västerås. The municipalities of Ronneby, Upplands-Väsby and Gävle plus the Älvsjö city district administration in Stockholm were also involved as reference areas. *A Municipality Free from Violence* is a model for working systematically with violence prevention in a municipal context and the initiative continues to be developed in a number of collaborations, including Violence Prevention Västerbotten.

The process for municipalities



The diagram above shows how work has progressed based on the various stages described in the handbook *Inget att vänta på*. Given the necessarily needs-driven nature of the work, some additions have been made in consultation with the participating municipalities.

Each stop along the timeline describes the starting date and content of that stage of the initiative. Process support, evaluation and the work of municipalities have been ongoing throughout the period. Process leader training will continue during 2021.

3 www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se

4 www.mfj.se

2. The purpose and objective of Violence Prevention Västerbotten

Given the background and method presented above, the purpose of the initiative is to contribute to increasing knowledge of how violence prevention in small/rural municipalities can be reinforced using a gender transformative approach. Based on the overall purpose, four sub-goals have been developed for the process:

- To promote the development of local and regional crime prevention efforts.
- To create a knowledge bank for long-term strategic work to prevent and combat men's violence against women and violence in general.
- To increase the participants' competence in the fields of violence prevention and gender.
- To promote structured cooperation to counter men's violence against women.



ILLUSTRATION: MATILDA HALL

3. Results and experiences

The results of and experiences gained from the Violence Prevention Västerbotten initiative are presented based on three aspects of the work:

- **The evaluators' results⁵** and experiences of following and evaluating process-oriented work.
- **The experiences of municipalities** of working in a process-oriented manner.
- **The experiences of the County Administrative Board** of working in a process-oriented manner.

The first part is an extract taken directly from the report of the external evaluators, who followed the initiative for a limited period from September 2018 until April 2020. The two subsequent parts are based on ongoing evaluations by the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten and coordinators in the four participating municipalities during regular monthly meetings. The County Administrative Board has also maintained ongoing contact with the municipalities' coordinators to provide support and offered feedback from evaluations of training initiatives with all participants. These two parts have been compiled by the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten in consultation with municipal coordinators.

5 External evaluation, final report, Klabböle Konsult and Klyo

The evaluators' results and experiences of following and evaluating process-oriented work

Violence prevention Västerbotten differs from a traditional project inasmuch as it was made clear from the beginning that the initiative was to be open ended. The idea was that the first 12 months of the initiative would mainly be a matter of introducing violence prevention into the work of the participating municipalities: Åsele, Vilhelmina, Norsjö and Sorsele. Furthermore, the initiative has prioritised a mutable, needs-driven process over setting goals and performance indicators – an understandable strategy given that the initiative is not a 'classic' project.

This does however present difficulties for an evaluator attempting to follow the progress of the initiative. Assessing the reasons for the success, or lack thereof, of the initiative's efforts is a challenge. Nor is evaluating the initiative based on achieving predefined objectives entirely fair. Falling short of certain objectives need not signify failure, it may simply reflect the fact that the work has been focused on some greater good, such as ensuring that the process endures and is implemented in day-to-day operations.

For this reason, the evaluation should not be viewed as an examination of the initiative's results in terms of objectives; rather, it needs to be placed in the context of the initiative's own documentation prior to the continued work, to present the lessons learned as a whole. The evaluation report should be regarded as a teaching document intended to contribute a better understanding of the initiative's strengths and weaknesses.

Two categories of result were defined based on the evaluators' work: one describing the results that already have components that guarantee sustainability, the other the results that the evaluation highlights as potentially sustainable if given further time or that might fall away. These less clear results relate to objectives that the initiative has formulated and/or stated and that, from the perspective of the evaluation, are difficult to define and flag as results. It is important to bear in mind that even a less clear result has underlying causes and lessons for the future.⁶

6 External evaluation, final report, Klabböle Konsult and Klyo

Results that are sustainable in the long term:

Training leaders to develop violence prevention in the four participating municipalities

This training is intended to strengthen the capability of participating municipalities to drive and develop their violence-prevention efforts with a gender transformative approach. The training also prepares staff to lead violence-prevention processes in other municipalities. The long-term goal is to lay the foundation for continued systematic, knowledge-based work to combat violence in general and men's violence against women in particular.

Focus on ensuring support from municipal mayors and chief executives

Formal support at the highest levels of municipal leadership for each municipality's involvement in the initiative is fundamental to sustainability, and this support must extend to implementing the proposals and results generated by the initiative. The municipality that addresses organisational issues early in the process has a greater chance of managing violence prevention strategically and sustainably over time. Otherwise, there is a risk that this work will be performed on an ad hoc basis through personal contacts and local knowledge.

The small-municipality perspective

The choice of four small municipalities in the county for Violence Prevention Västerbotten was very much a deliberate one. For their part, the municipalities saw themselves as chosen in a positive sense and, in both questionnaires and discussions, they have affirmed the benefits of gaining so much shared knowledge over a consecutive period of time. While this has not been a long period – around 18 months – a great deal can happen in a small municipality that is reflected in the progress of the initiative.

The initiative has encouraged the municipalities to have realistic expectations of both their own involvement in the project and the implementation of acquired knowledge and proposed changes.

Less clear results:

Gender equality, gender and violence prevention

It is difficult to compete with the insights and emotions that strike those who learn more about violence and its consequences. The stated ambition of the initiative to drive violence prevention work with a distinct gender perspective has therefore had a somewhat weak impact. In the opinion of the evaluators, as work continues the gender perspective will inevitably meet the criteria for inclusion under the heading "Sustainable results in the long term", given that gender knowledge also needs time to be assimilated and applied.

The placing of gender and the gender transformative approach among the less clear results is therefore not a criticism of any neglect of this perspective on the part of the County Administrative Board or MÄN, but rather a result of the participants' narratives and thus an attempt to explain that there are several images of the initiative's "gender strength" or, perhaps more appropriately, the initiative's *gender impact*.

Structure for feedback between training sessions

Given the vastness of Västerbotten County and the long distances between municipalities, meetings between the County Administrative Board and each municipality have been held digitally on a monthly basis, with an agenda as a point of departure. Quite early in the initiative, it became clear to MÄN, the County Administrative Board and the municipalities themselves that it would be a significant challenge for municipalities to find room to work on these issues between scheduled meetings. At least initially, it is more time-consuming to work intersectorally in a "core group" than, for example, for a single coordinator to deal with all issues related to violence prevention.

Decisions that facilitate practical violence prevention

It is difficult to obtain formal decisions about where and how violence prevention measures should be implemented on the ground in municipalities. Something that is becoming apparent in the initiative, and that bodes well for good decisions from a violence prevention perspective, is summed up by one of MÄN's training officers: "Those in decision-making positions are beginning to act based on a new knowledge".

Ownership at various levels

We need one direction and one leadership; a leadership that strives for collaborations and contexts in which violence prevention measures are prioritised, planned, implemented and followed up. The County Administrative Board has an assignment to prevent violence that extends until 2026.

Ownership is crucial to achieving results that are sustainable over time.

While there is no answer sheet for municipalities to crib from, they should at least have an idea or, even better, a template for how they can begin to address the questions in all of their various organisations.

The experiences of municipalities of working in a process-oriented manner

The experiences of municipalities are shared both in monthly meetings and evaluations conducted in conjunction with other meetings with and visits to municipalities.

Mutual exchange

There have been positive experiences of collaboration with the County Administrative Board, MÄN and the Police Authority, collaboration that has been reinforced during the initiative. The municipalities have also been appreciative of the exchange of experiences with one another and the lessons learned by all members of core groups in terms of working in a practical, process-oriented manner, as well as the exchanges between the coordinators participating in monthly meetings.

Monthly meetings

The monthly meetings with coordinators at the County Administrative Board have been rewarding. Municipal coordinators have felt continuous support for the process throughout the journey and have felt able to raise issues related to their own roles, job descriptions and work situations, and specific issues related to strategic approaches, in meetings and action plans/letters, as well as practical needs such as communication and method materials.

Working with existing processes and policies

Municipalities highlight a continued desire to work with existing processes and policies into which gender, gender equality and violence prevention can be integrated and contribute. The different conditions under which the municipalities operate are highlighted as a reason for this.

Agreements with the County Administrative Board

The requirement for representation from various organisations and seamless participation in the initiative has served both as a governance instrument vis-à-vis the municipality and to support designated coordinators.

Broad representation

The most widely mentioned strength is that, from day one, representatives of so many different organisations in each municipality have gathered to address violence prevention. During this process, an understanding has flowed that, given the important function performed by the municipal team, in fact more operations managers from different organisations should have been involved from the start. The municipalities have also identified a need to work broadly, as well as identifying organisations with whom collaboration needs to be developed, for example, civil society, the business community and healthcare.

Implementation and ownership

Municipalities also highlight the importance of implementation and ownership of issues earlier in the process, as well as of an established activity plan: once decisions are reached, mandates must be granted and resources allocated, and these need to be followed up internally in the municipality. They also highlight the need for support at all management levels, among other things to prioritise which organisations are to receive training and in which order. It can be difficult to keep working groups intact and maintain the momentum of the work between training sessions. The municipalities have found it difficult to varying degrees to carry the workload between physical meetings with the County Administrative Board and MÄN, meaning that, to a certain extent, these have become working meetings. It has proved necessary to remind municipal coordinators of the importance of participation and the need to appoint an equivalent replacement should they be unable to attend. As the work has continued, every municipality has faced a challenge in further clarifying expectations of those taking part, their mandates and roles.

Knowledge transfer

Knowledge has been transferred between the County Administrative Board and municipalities at several levels, something that has effected both organisations and increased the demand for further knowledge from the County Administrative Board to support the work of municipalities, exemplified by the increased demand from several working groups for expertise on the relationship between gender/gender equality and violence prevention.

The experiences of the County Administrative Board of working in a process-oriented manner

During this process, the County Administrative Board has learned a number of lessons about the implications of involvement in process-oriented work and providing continuous support.

From short-term to long-term learning

As well as working with a long-term process, the transition to a more proactive approach to violence has proved important to both municipalities and the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten in implementing the initiative. Learning has been a continuous process predicated on the needs and wishes of the municipalities, implying that the initiative has been needs-driven and thus, to some extent, developed in different directions than originally envisioned, for example, in terms of working methods and dialogue. Monitoring and analysis have taken a more continuous form in this process-oriented work than in individual activities and conferences.

The vital role of the municipal team

The County Administrative Board has used the agreements entered into with the municipalities, and the requirements for representation and participation therein, as governance instruments. The broad representation from various municipal organisations has been a prerequisite for achieving a municipality-wide approach and ensuring that more functions address the issue of violence. A route into municipal teams has been crucial, not only to rapid communication but also for maintaining support for the initiative within the municipalities. Each municipality has appointed a single coordinator, all of whom work on prevention as part of their regular duties. Monthly meetings with coordinators are an important process tool that allows the project to monitor both activities within the framework of Violence Prevention Västerbotten and more general events in the municipality. The advantages of working with smaller municipalities are that contact routes are shorter and it is easier to gather information and gain an overview of the process than it would be in a larger municipality. Municipal management has been provided with the same knowledge base as other participants, making it possible to shorten paths both in terms of working and decision-making. The County Administrative Board has also attended all meetings in order to ensure that its work rests on the same knowledge base as that of municipal teams. Attendance by participants from certain municipalities has been uneven. It may be advantageous to assign more tasks and plan more working meetings between monthly meetings.

Greater presence at municipalities and training

Over the course of the project, the County Administrative Board felt that certain municipalities may have needed a larger presence at start-up. One lesson to take with us is to make more digital visits to municipalities and to visit a larger part of the group in person. Training new members of municipal teams should be done in dialogue with coordinators and the County Administrative Board. In addition to clear instructions for tasks, the work conducted between meetings needs to be followed up with the entire project group rather than just the coordinator. This work needs to be prioritised in order to prevent the meetings from becoming work meetings for homework.

A common learning process

Through Violence Prevention Västerbotten, the County Administrative Board has gained clearer insight into not only municipal operations, but also the types of support that the County Administrative Board can provide. Unlike during individual training initiatives, the transfer of expertise between the County Administrative Board and municipalities works well in an ongoing process. The exchange of experiences between municipalities and between municipalities and the County Administrative Board has been educational and important to developing working methods. That said, there is clearly a need for greater structure when introducing new participants when, for whatever reason, municipal team members are replaced; here, the structure of work conducted in municipal teams is important. Changes to personnel have led to work stagnating and/or coordinators being forced to shoulder much greater individual responsibility for the process. Clearer instructions to the municipal team for onboarding new employees would have been useful and, here, the County Administrative Board can play a greater role.

The gender perspective in practice

While the County Administrative Board is tasked with working to ensure the regional impact of gender equality policy, in practice a clear strategy and follow-up procedure is required at municipalities so that the gender perspective is not obscured in their own work. This makes it crucial to shed light on gender aspects continuously during the process. Given this, and in line with the established national gender mainstreaming strategy, the County Administrative Board is cognisant of the importance of working with violence prevention in the municipality's existing processes and policies.

Internal coordination and growing pains within the County Administrative Board

Because the specialist areas *gender equality* and *crime prevention* have similar tasks associated with preventive work, it has been possible to develop a structured collaboration. The work of Violence Prevention Västerbotten has grown in step with the work of municipalities, while other commitments within the framework of the County Administrative Board's assignment have made it difficult to allocate the necessary time to cope with increasing demand. Greater consultation is required internally to determine the current state of work and agree on the division of tasks. While meetings were initially more needs-driven, over the past year the lesson has been learned and there has been a clearer structure around coordination. Clearer continuity is also required regarding following up and analysing measures, including continuous documentation of work conducted both within the County Administrative Board and by municipalities.

Increased regional and local collaboration

From day one, the County Administrative Board encouraged the municipalities to invite other stakeholders to join the work. The County Administrative Board sees a need for increased collaboration with regional and local stakeholders, such as the regional health authority on health centres, the business community and civil society. Cooperation with the police should also be further developed with regard to situational analyses and greater participation by the police in joint monthly meetings with municipalities. The initiative has also led to other initiatives, such as competence-enhancing measures for various groups of staff and training for the police region. Municipalities have raised the issue of violence as a matter for employers, which has led directly to a more prominent place on the agenda for the County Administrative Board's internal gender mainstreaming work. So, the initiative has boosted matters that the County Administrative Board is already working on, such as collaboration with the police on regional situational analyses and breaking down statistics by gender, in addition to violence as an employer issue.

4. Summary and continued efforts

In summary, we can see that, while the objectives defined at the outset of the initiative have been partially achieved, this type of process-oriented work will inevitably throw up new needs, broadening the front on which work is conducted and leaving further development work to be done. Areas for improvement include the development of less ambiguous gender-equality analyses before starting the initiative and on an ongoing basis during its implementation, the development of overarching situational analyses and the ongoing allocation of the County Administrative Board's resources. This is necessary in order to deal with inquiries from and meet the needs of municipalities as they arise, such as follow-ups between meetings and training sessions, and more coherent training for substitute and new members of municipal teams.

The County Administrative Board has a long-term vision for Violence Prevention Västerbotten and its knowledge support to municipalities. Presented below are a number of opportunities to improve and develop the ongoing initiative in collaboration with the municipalities and the police.

Gender-equality analyses

In the opinion of the County Administrative Board, there is a greater need for analysis from a gender perspective at municipal level, and for the gender mainstreaming of ongoing work with Violence Prevention Västerbotten.

Further development of situational analysis and indicators at municipal and regional level

An increased need for situational analysis has become apparent over the course of the initiative, to which end the work is now being developed as follows:

- **Development of local situational analyses.** There will be greater emphasis on violence and gender when mapping crime and insecurity at a local level. The point of departure for the initiative going forward will be the pyramid of violence and this will be integrated into existing situational analysis conducted by the municipality and police.
- **The County Administrative Board's internal situational analysis.** This needs to be developed further using statistics, analyses and monitoring. Situational analyses must describe the local life situation of women and men, based on a gender transformative approach to violence prevention.
- **Local goals and up-to-date situational analyses.** Municipalities should prepare local goals and situational analyses, tasks to which the County Administrative Board can contribute by preparing templates. Prior to this, the Board should prepare gender-equality data that can be used as a basis for formulating local goals.

VIOLENCE PYRAMID

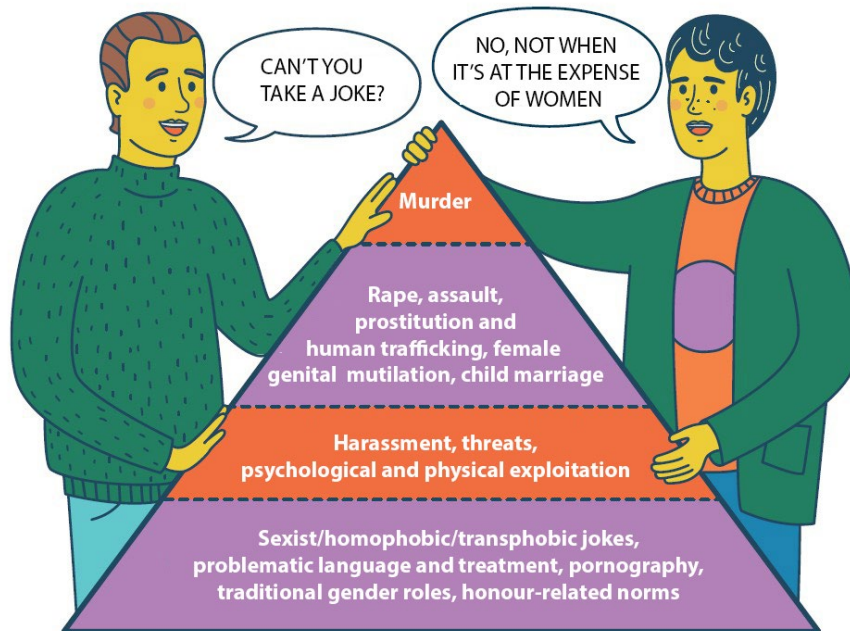


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A shared method and communication platform

Municipalities have expressed a desire for a digital resource that makes it easier for them to sort and choose methods. Requests have also been made for common communication and methodological materials. To meet these needs, the County Administrative Board's Communication Department is currently preparing communication materials and a SharePoint platform has been created.

Greater emphasis on situational prevention

The County Administrative Board is aware of the need to bridge the gap between social and situational crime prevention in order to transform the environment for countering violence. This process must be integrated into the initiative and several stakeholders at various levels will need to be involved.

Training process leaders in violence prevention

During autumn 2020, the County Administrative Board, the police and representatives of the four municipalities began a process leader training course. This is an intermediate course for the municipalities that have participated in Violence Prevention Västerbotten. This training is intended to strengthen the capability of participating municipalities and agencies to drive and develop their violence-prevention efforts. The training also prepares staff to lead violence-prevention processes in other municipalities in the county. The long-term goal is to lay the foundation for continued systematic, knowledge-based work to combat men's violence against women in particular and violence in general.



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