



Young
Men
Initiative

Care International Balkans
YOUNG MEN INITIATIVE
PROGRAM



Impact
Study

Research

January, 2023



Research

CARE INTERNATIONAL BALKANS

YOUNG MEN INITIATIVE PROGRAM: IMPACT STUDY RESEARCH

January, 2023

Acknowledgments

We are pleased to be able to present the Impact Study Research for CARE's regional Young Men Initiative (YMI), a long-term programme CARE in the Balkans has been implementing in cooperation with partner NGOs and institutional stakeholders and donors, covering wide range of topics that aimed to change behaviours and attitudes of young people and provide them with new perspectives and opportunities.

Young Men Initiative started with a small size qualitative research exploring young men's attitudes and behaviours, then over the years grew into a comprehensive program with different components targeting young people, parents, teachers, educational workers, university students, journalists and other important stakeholders. Since the beginning, the YMI has directly worked with over 130,000 youth in over 280 schools and over 1,800 teaching staff, while various educational programs and campaign activities reached 800,000 people throughout the Balkans.

Working with young people, young men in particular, for gender equality was an exceptional challenge for CARE and we have gone through tremendous path in the last 15 years. Young people adopt their personal lifestyles during the transition from family and home to adulthood under the influence of a complex mixture of economic, social, cultural, and educational processes. The programme, however, have had complementary features such as promotion of healthy lifestyles, non-violence education and campaigns that young people helped create giving them the sense of ownership and accomplishment.

These results could not be achieved without our partners organisations that implemented the programme: Act for Society Centre from Tirana, Institute for Population and Development from Sarajevo, Perpetuum Mobile from Banja Luka, Youth Power from Mostar, Status M from Zagreb, Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research from Pristina, YMCA from Gjakova, Centre E8 and Smart Kolektiv from Belgrade.

Major gratitude and acknowledgments go to organisations that recognised the need for intervention and our approach and who gave enormous contributions and financial support. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided initial support and since 2014 YMI has been funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, Government of Switzerland and Oak Foundation. This tremendous support made it possible for CARE and partners to work with generations of young people and develop the programme that encompasses relevant methodologies and approaches.

This program couldn't be implemented without strong cooperation among CARE offices, and we would like to thank CARE Germany, CARE Austria and CARE Norway for their unconditional efforts and contributions.

We would like to thank all teaching staff, professors and school directors as well as institutional representatives that recognised this program and made heroic changes in their communities and most of all young people who participated in the programme.

CARE and its partners encourage governments and stakeholders to adopt life skills education as part of their comprehensive efforts in working with young people. Any approach must bring schools, communities, families, and other important civil society actors together to support young people as they emerge into young adults. We hope this Impact Study provides an impetus for the systematic change.

Sumka Bučan, MSc

Regional Director, CARE Balkans

CARE INTERNATIONAL

In the Balkan region, CARE International has over 25 years of experience in program implementation. During the '90-es wars and conflicts, CARE responded to the destruction, traumatization, displacement, and inter-ethnic hatred with its massive humanitarian and life-saving work all over the Balkans. From the year 2000, CARE's orientation shifted to developmental work and its aim in the Balkans today is to ensure that social, economic and political rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups are recognized and fulfilled, contributing to sustainable peace in the region. CARE Program Strategy is based on two pillars: a) Socio-Economic Inclusion of vulnerable minorities and other marginalized groups by contributing to stronger capacities and improved opportunities for them, enabling them to integrate into society and access their rights, b) Gender Equality of vulnerable and marginalized groups by promoting the values and practices of gender equality, diversity and non-violence, strengthening the capacities of local, national and regional human rights and social justice actors and creating opportunities for innovation, participation, learning, cooperation and advocacy. CARE nourishes partnerships with the local civil society sector and governments dedicated to contributing positive changes in the societies.

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List of abbreviations

AWEN – Albanian Women Empowerment Network
BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMC – Be a Man club
CEDAW – The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CoE – Council of Europe
FB – Facebook
FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GBV – Gender-Based Violence
HBSC – Health behavior in school-age children
IDRA – Intercultural Development Research Association
IG – Instagram
IWF – Internet Watch Federation
Ipsos – Institut Public de Sondage d'Opinion Secteur
KR – key respondents
NGO – Non-Governmental organization
NSVRC – National Sexual Violence Resource Center
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RS – Republika Srpska
SRH – Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN – The United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – The United Nations Children's Fund
YMI – Young Men Initiative



Executive summary

Executive
summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and objectives

Since 2006, a coalition of local, regional, and international organizations has been promoting positive masculine identities under the banner of the Young Men Initiative (YMI). YMI is a regional program built upon CARE's comprehensive and programmatic effort to fight interpersonal and gender-based violence (GBV), as well as improve gender equality in the region and address preventative measures related to youth extremism and violence. The program is being implemented in municipalities and high schools in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia. The heart of YMI is "Program Y" (youth), which focuses on transforming the school environment into one that promotes gender equality and a culture of non-violence. The core of Program Y's intervention is a series of group educational workshops accompanied by social norms campaigns that promote a critical and personal reflection on gender, masculinities, and health, with a strong focus on violence prevention.

The objective of the impact study is to discover the changes that occurred in implementation sites in terms of the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in the period from 2014 until 2020 in key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) the prevention of sexual violence, as a result of the direct engagement of CARE and its partners. The study also aims to identify which methods and approaches

(school-based workshops, school and/or community-based campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs – BMC) were most effective in the given context and circumstances.

CARE intends to determine the level and the type of impact in the three following domains, which are all linked to the five key areas mentioned above:

1. Change in the knowledge, skills, and confidence of high school boys and girls, as a result of direct participation in Program Y school-based workshops, school and/or community-based campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs.
2. Change in the attitudes and behaviors of high school boys and girls, as a result of participation in school-based workshops, campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs, as well as their capacity to adequately respond to the violence happening to them or others.
3. Methods and approaches that worked best in the given context and circumstances.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. Applies to the whole document.

Method

The evaluation entails the application of various quantitative and qualitative research methods, including the analysis of different types of documents (research reports, policies, etc.), as well as the implementation of a number of interviews and focus groups.

This impact study consists of several components providing a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the preventative tools, methods, and approaches used over time through Program Y in the given context and the 2014–2020 period. The consultant used the following methods:

1. **Context overview:** A brief regional analysis and country overview on peer, gender-based, and sexual violence among youth between 14 and 19 years of age in Serbia, Kosovo*, Albania, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the analysis describes the state measures in place at the national, cantonal, and local levels to ensure the prevention of all forms of violence.
2. **Desktop analysis:** A review of the data gathered from a series of school-based evaluations and project-related studies

Main conclusions

The findings from all the target locations showed that participants experienced considerable or positive changes at the **personal and social skills** levels. They claimed to have gained self-respect and felt greater self-esteem as a direct result of the program's activities. They have learned to express their views more freely and openly as well as to embrace diversity. The participants have developed greater resilience to peer pressure and improved their communication skills. They claim their critical thinking has improved and that they have learned how to deal with their own emotions.

and reports conducted between 2014 and 2020. During each project phase, researchers and the YMI team gathered relevant data and inputs through School Baseline Assessments implemented at the beginning of each project cycle and School Endline Evaluations conducted at the end of those project cycles. These separate research reports were analyzed and used to present the impact of Program Y on youth in the five mentioned areas, along with other project reports and final project evaluations.

3. **Interviews:** Interviews and focus groups with former and current program participants and key stakeholders (school representatives, ministries, local CSOs, etc.) were organized. This entailed:
 - a. Focus groups with users who participated in Program Y, which was implemented in secondary schools,
 - b. Individual or group interviews with representatives of the school staff (principals, pedagogues, and teachers) or other stakeholders.

When it comes to **impacting youth attitudes and behavior**, we can conclude that the endline studies have observed several positive outcomes. Improvements have been made in the areas of gender equality, youth participation in household activities, prevention of violence, including gender-based violence, and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. Consistent progress has not been observed in terms of the consumption of psychoactive substances. The most positive changes occurred in the areas of gender-equitable relations and violence prevention.

When it comes to **attitudes and behaviors**, the biggest change was noted in the domain of gender equitable relations, violence prevention, and gender-based violence. Youth also reported having taken a more active part in the household, as well as taking better care of their sexual and reproductive health. We noted a low level of sexual violence, but the young people claimed they were now more informed about types of sexual violence. No consistent progress was identified in terms of psychoactive substance consumption.

Besides the above-mentioned, participants pointed out the importance of interactive work, the involvement of peer educators and teachers, and the fact that the program lasted several years and involved all pupils instead of only a few selected ones.

Data shows that all aspects of the intervention (participation in Be a Man Clubs, campaigns, and workshops) have contributed to certain improvements in the attitudes and behaviors of young men and women in various spheres of their lives. **Participants uniformly agree that the combination of workshops, campaigns, and participation in BMCs was the most important factor in these changes.** The workshops had a direct impact on the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in certain spheres of life.

However, these changes became more pronounced as a result of the campaigns and their involvement with the local BMC. The campaigns mostly contributed to spreading the Program's messages in the community, whereas the BMC was responsible for the most profound and long-lasting individual changes.

The work concept of this program yielded good results and should be supported and further developed in the future. Additionally, systematic support from institutions is needed to establish mechanisms so that young people know who to contact when they encounter problems or have other needs. We expect that the program will encourage responsible educational institutions and schools to more actively work on establishing sustainable mechanisms, such as a curriculum that leads to the improvement of the lifestyles of youth. We hope that CARE International, in cooperation with its donors and local partners, will continue the work that has thus far improved school environments and created better circumstances for the healthy development of young men and women in the Balkans.

INTRODUCTION

In the period 2014-2017, Care International and its local partners implemented a preventive program (known as "Program Y") aimed at the improvement of young persons' life in the areas of: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention of sexual violence. As evaluation results from individual phases of the program were never integrated, the purpose of this analysis and report is to consolidate the results and impacts of the mentioned program and improve future programming in the Balkans. The impact study was implemented with the support of Oak Foundation, CARE Austria, and CARE Deutschland.

The mission of CARE International Balkans in the region is to contribute to post-war recovery and the socio-economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo*, and Montenegro. CARE's work in the Balkans started in 1992 when it provided humanitarian support to people affected by war. In the late 1990s, CARE shifted its focus in the region from humanitarian post-war assistance and rehabilitation to socio-economic development, engaging in interventions directed at conflict prevention and peace-building, sustainable livelihoods, gender equality, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Since 2006, a coalition of local, regional, and international organizations have been promoting positive masculine identities under the banner of the Young Men Initiative (YMI). YMI is a regional program that includes ministries of education, pedagogical

institutes, schools, students, parents, and NGOs in a partnership and proactive process of development, testing, and improvement of educational programs, in order to create better educational and health opportunities for young people. The Program targeted youth, especially young men vulnerable to violence and anti-social behaviors, with an aim to strengthen their key skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and thereby encourage better behavior around gender equitable norms and non-violence. Coordinated by CARE International Balkans, implemented by collaborating youth civil society organizations and governmental institutions in five countries/territories, and evaluated by external researchers, YMI seeks to promote a lifestyle that prioritizes good health¹, nonviolence, and gender equality through a combination of educational workshops and community campaigns. YMI started with small-size qualitative research exploring young men's attitudes and behaviors that have helped develop the program framework with the key the matic areas and the most adequate approaches based on the context and the research findings. Over the years, it grew into a comprehensive program with different components targeting young people, parents, teachers, educational workers, university students, journalists, and other important stakeholders. Since the beginning, the program has directly reached over 130,000 young people across the Balkans, with an indirect reach of over 13 million people.

The first six years YMI was supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the last 9 years YMI is being funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation,

¹ No drug or alcohol abuse, responsible driving, taking care of sexual and reproductive health, doing sports and regular medical check-ups, etc.

Government of Switzerland and Oak Foundation.

The core of the YMI intervention is a series of group educational workshops accompanied by social norms campaigns that promote a critical and personal reflection on gender, masculinity, and health, with a strong focus on violence prevention. The workshops are highly participatory and address health and relationship issues from a gender lens, including sexual and reproductive health,

Program Y

The “Program Y – Youth” is an evidence-based educational curriculum that aims to develop the functional knowledge, attitudes, and psychosocial skills of young people, all of which are important for a healthy and safer growing up. It is a useful tool and training manual for educators in high schools and youth workers focused on addressing gender inequalities, harmful health practices, and violence in everyday life with young men and young women aged 14 to 19 in schools and the community. Based on modern pedagogical work methods, which include collaborative and participatory learning, Program Y teaches young people

communication and negotiation, drug and alcohol use, anger management, and violence prevention. Since 2014, CARE and its partners have started with the development of a tailored program for youth that has become one of the cornerstones of the intervention. The heart of YMI is Program Y (youth)², which is focused on transforming the school environment into one that supports and nurtures gender equality and promotes a culture of non-violence.

to recognize and understand risks, think critically about the consequences, and make decisions that are in the best interest of their health and the health of their peers.

Program Y presents a documented success in the Western Balkans and is currently being implemented in elementary and high schools, allowing for a high direct reach and levels of participation. Program sessions are led by trained facilitators and are integrated into the school syllabus in various ways, such as individual classes, extracurricular activities, or parts of head-teacher classes.

² Program Y – Innovative Approaches in GBV Prevention and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion for Young Men and Women



Regional analysis of peer, gender- based and sexual violence

Regional analysis
of peer,
gender-based and
sexual violence



REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF PEER, GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH

Background

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines **youth violence** as the “intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10–24.” Youth violence can include anything from bullying or fighting to threats with weapons and gang-related violence. When we talk about youth violence, a young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness. The United Nations asserts that “youth violence is a global public health problem which includes a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting to more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide.” It can start at a very young age and culminate as the person gets older, but it can also start at the victims’ later age. There are different types of youth violence.

Peer violence has been defined as a repeated action that is intentionally exercised to harm others on purpose; it is violence that is patterned rather than an isolated occurrence (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Willmore, 2015). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines gender-based violence as harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender and rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms. Sexual violence, as defined by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center

(NSVRC), means that someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without his or her consent.

The United Nations (UN) concludes in their assessments that violence is one of the top four reasons for the death of young people. Each year there are around 200,000 homicides among youth aged 10–29. That accounts for 43% of the total number of homicides worldwide. Of this number, 83% are young men. Even more young people sustain injuries and require medical treatment. Peer violence sometimes transfers to sexual violence. UN also avows that 3–24% of young women report that their first sexual experience was forced. The consequences of any form of youth violence are numerous and life-long and affect the psychological, physical, and social functioning of victims. Another consequence is that victims of violence can become perpetrators.

Uncertainty, growing social disparities, difficult economic choices, and shifting social and cultural expectations are making the transition from adolescence to adulthood a greater challenge than it was before. Social contexts in which individuals grow up shape their identity, with implications on behavior during the critical transition

to adulthood in which so many key first life decisions are made (Kirkpatrick Johnson, Mollborn 2009). The roles a young person occupies and experiences, shape the age one perceives oneself to be (George 1990; Logan, Ward and Spitze 1992). Children exposed to different forms of violence are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, smoke, misuse alcohol and drugs,

Objective

The purpose of this report is to summarize state measures, policies, and strategies that are utilized in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia, as well as offer a regional perspective on the issue of youth violence. More so, it is an opportunity to analyze the liaison between policies that touch upon peer, gender-based, and sexual violence in these countries. This paper also provides a brief regional analysis and country overview on peer, gender-based, and sexual violence among youth in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

self-harm, and engage in high-risk sexual behavior. Stansfeld et al. (2017) found that high exposure to violence was associated with high levels of emotional disorders in adolescents that were not buffered by social support. Likewise, they also identified an urgent need for interventions to reduce exposure to violence in young people.

Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia. There are several studies on these topics, but for the purpose of this brief analysis, we only used the most relevant ones. A comparison of state measures between the countries, as well as a comparison of available data on peer, gender-based, and sexual violence, is presented here. The primary aim of this assessment and data collection is not to compile statistics, but rather to help with future program planning as a response to identified issues of concern.

International and Regional Context On Youth Violence (Peer, GBV And Sexual) in The Balkans

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia demonstrate (at least declarative) commitment to dealing with gender-based violence, sexual violence, and youth protection. Despite this, violence continues to be a pressing issue and requires further attention and efforts to overcome it. This said, all of these countries have different institutional mechanisms and have signed or ratified various international treaties. To name a few:

- *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (2015)* aims at solving global challenges, as well as envisages the elimination of violence. It also deals with gender equality, more specifically eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation. The Council of Europe initiated November 18 as a day that marks the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

- *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993) defines violence against women and underlines that women are entitled, among other things, to the right to equality, the right to liberty and security of the person, etc. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), which among other things defines the basic civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights of children, also establishes principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the participation of children. The Convention also prescribes the protection of children from violence and abuse, including the protection of children from all forms of exploitation.

The Council of Europe's *Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (2007), also known as the Lanzarote Convention, covers measures for the prevention, identification, investigation, and punishment of all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Many countries are also signatories of the *European Convention on Human Rights*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995). The same goes for the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (2011), the so-called *Istanbul Convention*.

Albania

Albania's political system is a presidential-parliamentary democracy. The Parliament of Albania, called the People's Assembly, is a body that adopts the laws. The state authority responsible for gender equality, combating gender-based violence and domestic violence, and the prevention of violence against women and youth, is the Minister of Health and Social Protection through the National Council for Gender Equality and the Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender

Equality. The highest advisory body on gender equality issues is the National Council for Gender Equality, while the same role in terms of child protection lies with the National Council for Child Rights and Protection. The Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, a division of the General Directorate of Policies and Development of Health and Social Protection at the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, drafts policies and programs related to child issues.

State measures

The *Constitution of the Republic of Albania*, using neutral language, implies that all its citizens have the same rights, regardless of gender, age, or any other individual characteristic. It also stipulates that children have the right to be protected against violence, maltreatment, and exploitation, especially those under the minimum age for child labor. The *Criminal Code* of the Republic of Albania defines provisions for

criminal offenses against children, marriage, and family. When it comes to children, it prescribes sanctions for the maltreatment of children, trafficking of minors, sexual or homosexual relations with minors, pornography, etc. The Code also prescribes penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence. *Law on Measures Against Violence in Family Relations* guarantees the protection of family members who are victims of

domestic violence. Following amendments in 2018 and 2020, the Law gives special attention to women and includes children. *Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child* defines the right of a child to healthy physical, mental, moral, spiritual, and social development, as well as to enjoy a family and social life that is appropriate for the child.

Several resolutions and decisions address the rights of children and youth – *Resolution on Condemnation of Violence Against Women and Girls and Increase of Effectiveness of Legal Mechanisms for its Prevention, Measures to Protect Children from Access to Illegal and/or Harmful Internet Content*, etc.

Overview of studies

Sexual violence is a major problem in Albania. A big percentage of crimes committed in Albania are sex-related. According to data published on Childhub, sex crimes with minors make up around 40% of total sex crimes in the country. The legal age limit for consensual sex is 14; however, 67% of victims of sexual crimes are minors under the age of 14, while 81% of victims of sexual crimes committed with minors under the age of 18 are women. Albania is combating this problem by hiring more child protection workers and by strengthening its Criminal Code. However, only around 40% of perpetrators are convicted, which is a growing issue in policy implementation. *Health Behavior in School-Age Children* (HBSC) 2017-2018 is a study conducted by the European HBSC network in Albania with children, both boys and girls, aged 11, 13, and 15. The study showed that about 22% of Albanian children were bullied by their peers³. Around 30% of boys and 20% of girls were the perpetrators, i.e. one in four children bullied someone in the months prior to the study. When it comes to what forms of violence were applied, around 22% of children either cyber-bullied someone or were cyber-bullied, and around 30% experienced physical violence, which means almost one in two boys and every fifth girl. Around 32% of pupils (28% girls, 37% boys) reported at least one injury that required medical attention. In addition, around 31% of children experienced lifetime physical

abuse and around 16% experienced lifetime emotional abuse; around 2% of respondents experienced lifetime physical neglect and 14% experienced emotional neglect. Physical neglect was higher with boys. An important piece of information is that 69% of children, i.e. almost two-thirds, stated that they never experienced assault by their parents or other adults in their household. 26% of youth were physically abused once or twice in their lifetime. As a response to the results of a national survey on bullying and extremism in the education system, conducted in May 2016, the Council of Europe designed a program that was implemented in 21 schools in Albania, followed by a post-study. According to the UN Women Albania, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, from March to May 2020, the number of calls to the national counseling hotline tripled compared to the same period a year before, while the number of domestic violence reports to the police was lower than in 2019. Dragoti (2017) presented findings of a post-study that surveyed 2377 students, 3560 teachers, and 970 parents. Results showed that 19.4% of students experienced bullying or something related to bullying at least two or three times per month, and 29% experienced it once or twice a month. 9.7% of students see themselves as victims of bullying, while 5.2% admitted they bullied someone, and 4.3% that they were both the victims and perpetrators of violence. 60% of teachers stated that violence is present in schools

³ Around 20% girls and around 25% boys.

and 23% of parents stated that their child/children was/were victims of assault.

The most common forms of peer violence (according to teachers)	
Verbal violence	78%
Psychological abuse	61%
Cyber violence	51%

Perceive themselves as...	Boys	Girls
Bullies	52%	32%
Victims	51%	48%

The biggest percentage of peer violence was noticed among pupils aged 15-16, followed by pupils aged 10-11. In terms of the location where violence happens the most, 39% of children reported the classroom when teachers are not present, 38% stated the playground, and 13% stated that violence happens in the classroom even if the teacher is present. When surveyed about forms of violence, 45% of students reported psychological violence, 37% verbal violence, 33% physical violence, and 15% cyber violence.

IDRA Research & Consulting, with the support of the UN Women's Country Office Albania, conducted a study on gender-based violence called *Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Gender-Based Violence in Urban Public Spaces in Albania* (2019). A total of 750 women over 16 years of age participated in this research. 34% of survey participants stated that sexual harassment happens everywhere while 18% stated that it happens often. 38% of the women stated that they have been at risk or were exposed

to sexual violence before the age of 15. 40% of respondents reported that girls or women who experienced sexual violence provoked it themselves, and one in three stated that violence should be kept private. Research showed that sexual violence is more common after the age of 15. Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), as part of the program "Protection and Promotion of Women Rights in Albania," conducted a research study titled *Intimate Partner Violence in Adolescents in Albania* (2019). 1036 people aged 16-19 participated in this study. 22% of survey participants stated that they experienced some form of partner violence, girls more often than boys (28% girls, 20% boys), while one in 10 respondents considered it acceptable to pressure a partner to have intercourse. This research showed that girls experience violence from their partners almost three times more than boys do. Girls mostly experienced threatening, humiliation, or physical abuse. The percentage of sexual violence committed by a partner was almost equal for boys and girls. 43% of young people who experienced

partner violence also suffered from domestic abuse, while young people who had not suffered from domestic abuse were three

times less victimized. Around 50% of survey participants said that they were unlikely to tell anyone if they were victims of violence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, known as the Dayton Peace Accord ⁴, Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District (BD). FBiH consists of 10 cantons, each with its own government and assembly, with the former developing and the latter adopting laws. At the BiH level, legislative authority lies with the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, which adopts general framework laws. The FBiH Parliament, consisting of the FBiH House of Representatives and the FBiH House of Peoples, holds legislative authority at the FBiH level. The President and two Vice-Presidents, as well as the FBiH Government hold executive authority. In Republika Srpska,

the RS National Assembly and the RS Council of Peoples hold the legislative authority, while the President, two Vice-Presidents, and the RS Government have the executive authority. As a result of the International Arbitration Commission, Brčko District was placed under the management of BiH in 2000. Brčko District has its own government, assembly, judiciary, and police. As for institutional gender mechanisms, the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity gender centers – Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Gender Equality Centre of the Government of Republika Srpska have been formed. This complicated structure makes addressing an issue and developing a cohesive solution or measures a challenge.

State measures

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a complex country in terms of structure. It is comprised of two entities, Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of BiH (FBiH), as well as the Brčko District. As a result of this structure, some legal provisions are adopted at the state level, while others are adopted at the entity/district level, with some entity/district laws needing to be harmonized with state regulation. Regarding gender-based violence, numerous laws, conventions,

documents, etc. are in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, BiH is a signee to international documents regarding the protection of human rights and is obligated to harmonize its legislation with EU legislation. *The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina* is the country's main legal framework, with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women from

⁴ Also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement, Dayton Accords, Paris Protocol or Dayton-Paris Agreement, is the peace agreement reached at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, United States, in November 1995, and formally signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. These accords put an end to the three and a half-year-long Bosnian War. (<https://www.osce.org/bih/126173>)

1978 and The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women from 1957 constituting a part of the Constitution's Annex 1. In addition to international conventions, declarations, and the *Constitution of BiH*, the *Criminal Code of FBiH*, the *Criminal Code of RS*, and the *Criminal Code of Brčko District* are other important pieces of legislation that regulate gender protection. FBiH, RS, and Brčko District laws on protection from domestic violence prescribe protection measures against stalking and harassment. The BiH Law on Gender Equality is also an important part of the legal framework in BiH. It regulates gender equality rights on a more general basis, while entities and cantons place specific emphasis on this issue in their respective legislation. The RS Law on gender equality, for example, defines

Overview of studies

Unfortunately, there are not many studies on peer, GBV, or sexual violence that focus on young women in BiH. In 2013, the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees Research conducted the research "Prevalence and characteristics of violence against women in BiH" (Babović, 2013). According to findings, almost half of the surveyed women (47.2%) had experienced one or more types of violence since a young age (age of 15). Additionally, according to the research, young women (aged 18-24) are more exposed to violence than older women are. Moreover, the research shows that young women are more susceptible to violence. This is statistically significant for young women in RS, but not for those in FBiH. The highest rates of violence have been observed among young women in RS (aged 18-34). Such rates are mostly a consequence of physical and psychological violence committed against respondents by their intimate partners. The most common form of violence perpetrated against women, in general, is psychological violence (41.9%), followed by physical violence (24.3%). Moreover,

sexual harassment and sexual blackmail. The establishment of the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Centre for Gender Equity and Equality - Gender Centre of Republika Srpska was one of the requirements for BiH to enter the Council of Europe. These centers support the process of gender equality on the entity level. BiH has ratified or inherited several international commitments on gender equality, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the European Council Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), also known as the Istanbul Convention, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

20.8% of women aged 19-24 experience psychological violence, while 2.4% experience physical violence. The violence that women experience was mostly conducted by their partners (39% of respondents), while 17% of respondents experienced violence by both their partners and other family members. Furthermore, this research surveyed two types of psychological violence - emotional violence and restrictions on their freedom. Results showed that more women in Bosnia and Herzegovina experience restrictions on freedom (26.8%) than emotional violence (25.5%). At the entity level, in the Federation of BiH, 28.1% of surveyed women experience or have experienced restrictions on freedom, while 26.4% experience or have experienced emotional violence. In Republika Srpska, 24.4% of women experience or have experienced restrictions on freedom with 23.9% of women experiencing emotional violence. These findings are associated with women in general, but one can assume that the results are similar for young women who also participated in the research. In terms of sexual violence, almost 10% of women aged 19-24 experienced sexual violence

perpetrated by their partner or somebody else. According to the Agency for Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a surge in gender-based violence after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, SOS phones received 47% more calls than in the year before the pandemic (2019), and the number of survivors in safe houses increased by 50%. Regarding sexual abuse, 28% of women first experienced it at the young age of 15, with 15% of respondents reporting having experienced the most severe forms of sexual abuse. Šahinović (2017), in the baseline research conducted in BiH with schoolteachers (126 females and 25 males) in the three cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo Canton, Herzeg-Neretva Canton, and Central-Bosnian Canton), focused on peer and gender-based violence in primary schools. According to findings based on interviews with teachers, schools with 201-500 students have the highest percentage of peer and gender-based violence, while schools with more than 800 students have the lowest percentage. Most survey participants consider family history the biggest cause of violence, followed by the media, games, and the Internet. Teachers emphasized that the most common form of peer and gender-based violence is psychological violence (35.5%), while verbal abuse was in second place at 27% and physical was assessed at 10%. 71% of teachers stated that violence is

most often conducted individually. It was discovered that boys employed physical violence more commonly, while girls mostly used verbal abuse. Research also showed that pupils often do not report violence (47.4%). According to the IWF annual report for 2012, the year 2021 was by far the worst in history for sexual abuse of youth and children on the Internet, with the most prevalent age of child sexual abuse imagery being 11-13. Based on the Child Protection Hub, findings in Bosnia and Herzegovina show that one in seven children would meet up with an unknown person they had just met online and that they would do it without any company. Research on the welfare and safety of women, conducted by the OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018, shows that 14% of interviewed women experienced some form of physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 and 1% were under the age of 15. Moreover, 28% of women experienced some form of sexual harassment since the age of 15, with 15% experiencing the most severe forms of sexual harassment. The same study shows that one in ten women aged 18-74 who have had a partner experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15 (FBiH: 10%; RS: 12%). When it comes to sexual harassment, 26% of women aged 18-74 in FBiH and 31% of women aged 18-74 in RS reported to having experienced sexual harassment.

Croatia

The Republic of Croatia joined the European Union in July 2013. The Government is the holder of executive power, i.e. it proposes the laws. The Croatian Parliament is the representative body of citizens and the holder of legislative power. In addition to the judiciary, there is a public defender's office that promotes and protects the constitutional and legal rights of citizens, as

well as a public defender for children, gender equality, and the equality of persons with disabilities. A Commission for monitoring and improving the work of bodies engaged in criminal and misdemeanor proceedings and the enforcement of sanctions related to protection against domestic violence supervises the implementation of the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence.

State measures

The Republic of Croatia adopted numerous laws and by-laws regulating different forms of violence. The *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia* prohibits discrimination based on race, skin color, sex, and several other characteristics. In addition to the Constitution, the legal framework in Croatia consists of several relevant laws and protocols. The *Criminal Code* contains articles regarding victims, their rights, children as victims of violence, victims of crimes against sexual freedom, etc. It defines violent behavior in the family, prevention of violence, crimes against sexual freedom, crimes against the sexual freedom of minors, family abuse, etc. Family Law regulates violence towards children and women, the roles of family members, and the protection of children from other family members. *Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence* defines different forms of domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual, economical economic, etc.), and whom it includes, sanctions, etc. The Croatian Parliament first passed the *Law on Gender Equality* in 2003 and the latest version, which is aligned with EU directives, was passed in 2008 with amendments in 2017. This law prohibits any form of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, and forbids gender-based violence and the ill-treatment of women. It further prohibits discrimination in education, at work, and other areas. The Law also regulates gender-related issues and outlaws discrimination based on sex, economic status, ethnicity, race, language, social status, religion, sexual orientation, health condition, disability, political, or other beliefs. *National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality* was first adopted in 2006 as the basic strategic document for eliminating discrimination against women and establishing equality between women and men. It has been updated several times, and the most recent version pertains to the period 2011-2015. In 2014, the government of the Republic

of Croatia adopted the *Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Abuse and Neglect of Children* to standardize the procedure for sexual abuse victims, to have a long-term impact on sexual violence reduction, to ensure victim care, to ensure quality medical protection for victims, etc. The Protocol also specifies the responsibilities of competent authorities regarding the detection and suppression of sexual abuse and violence, as well as the forms, methods, and content of cooperation between competent authorities. In 2004, the Government of the Republic of Croatia signed the *Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence*. This protocol prescribes the responsibilities of competent authorities regarding the detection and suppression of domestic abuse and violence. It also defines the forms, methods, and content of cooperation between competent authorities, including responsibilities regarding the detection and suppression of violence, and helping and protecting victims of domestic abuse. The Gender Equality Office developed the *Rules of Procedure in Cases of Sexual violence* in 2015, which defines the responsibilities of the competent authorities in their response to victims of sexual violence; the protection of victims' mental health; and the forms, manner, and content of cooperation of competent authorities in responding to sexual violence. Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence amongst Children and Youth prescribes the responsibilities of the competent bodies, the forms and the manner of cooperation between all competent bodies and other stakeholders involved in the prevention, detection, and suppression of violence among children and youth. The Republic of Croatia marks September 22 as the National Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in memory of three women killed and one injured in the Zagreb Civil Municipal Court in 1999 during a divorce case.

Overview of studies

Ipsos (2010) conducted research on peer violence for the Centre for Peace Studies called *Violence leaves marks - ring the bell for non-violence*. The research was implemented in 18 schools, with a total of 700 students aged 7-18 (55% female, 40% male, and 5% not responding). Results showed that 41% of children feel that students insult and make fun of each other, while 24% report that physical fights occur. The good news is that almost 80% of students said that they can always rely on their teachers if they have any concerns or problems with other students. The research showed that in the month before the survey was conducted, 75.7% gossiped about other classmates on one occasion or more, 76.4% feel they were the subject of gossip, 40.2% purposefully pushed other classmates once or more times, 36.5% hit a peer once or more times, 20% threatened their classmates once or more times. 79.3% of students stated that they were both victims and perpetrators of violence. When asked why they think peer violence occurs, the majority stated jealousy as the number one reason (17.1%), and 16% stated that their peers do it to "look cool." Statistics show that in the first nine months of 2021, 113 children (younger than 18) were victims of crimes against sexual freedom, and there were 731 sexual abuse and child extortion cases reported. From 2016 to September 2021, this number fluctuated. The highest number of crimes against sexual freedom was reported in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 121 cases, and the highest number of sexual abuse and child extortion cases was reported in 2018, with 800 cases. Croatia's Gender Equality Ombudsperson reported a rise in domestic violence against women in 2021 by 43.4% compared to 2019 (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2020). The Ajduković et al. (2011) research on gender differences and predictors of violence in youth relationships encompassed 623 high

school students from 14 secondary schools in Croatia (average age 16.8, 56% boys, 44% girls). In the six months before the research, 86.4% of survey participants experienced abuse in relationships, while 93.1% abused their partner. The research showed that girls perpetrate violence more often, as well as admit more to doing so.

Mamula (2011), in their research *Sexual violence in Croatia 2000-2010*, showed that the most frequent victims of sexual assault are children under 14 (32%), followed by minors aged 14-18 (30%) and young adults aged 19-22 (15%). "The victims' age is related to the forms of sexual violence they experience throughout life; young children are the most frequent victims of lewd conduct (38%), satisfying lust in front of a child (28%), and sexual activity with a child (16%). Minors are the most frequent victims of lewd conduct (35%), satisfying lust in front of a child or minor (16%), sexual activity with a child (14%), and rape (13%). Young adults aged 19-22 are most frequently victims of rape (34%) and pandering (12%). The most common rape victims are young adults aged 19-30 (43%) and minors (22%)." After Croatia ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2018, gender-based violence increased by 50% in the country. According to data from the Ministry of Interior, in 2022, almost 1500 cases of domestic abuse were reported with most of the victims being women. The number of women killed by their close relatives or family increased (11 in the first eight months of 2022), with 47% killed by their partners. UNICEF-run *Analysis of Gender Issues for Croatia* (2011) shows that the most common criminal offenses against boys and girls under 14 are abuse and negligence, with cases increasing every year. In 1999, 384 such cases were reported against boys and 95 against girls, increasing to 522 cases against boys and 364 against girls in 2009. From 2000 to 2008 almost 19

times more adults were accused of domestic violence petty offenses, with men dominant in perpetration. In 2008, 11.7% more women

were accused of domestic violence petty offenses than in 2000.

Kosovo*

Kosovo* is a partially recognized state and disputed territory located in Southeastern Europe. On February 17, 2008, Kosovo* unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. It has since gained diplomatic recognition as a sovereign state by 97 UN member states⁵. The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo* exercises the legislative power, while the Government of the Republic of Kosovo* is responsible for the implementation of laws and state policies and is subject to parliamentary control. Some of the institutions responsible

for the implementation of various violence prevention measures prescribed by the executive authorities are the Agency for Gender Equality, which has the mandate to draft, execute, and propose as well as to coordinate and monitor domestic and international public policies related to gender equality; and the Women's Caucus in the Assembly of Kosovo*, established in 2005 to promote gender equality and advance the legislative framework concerning gender equality.

State measures

Like most other countries, Kosovo* has amended its Constitution to include laws for preventing and combating violence against women including domestic violence. The *Criminal Code* defines gender-based violence as a "violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, and shall mean all acts of gender based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." The *Law on Protection against Domestic Violence* gives the authorities power to intervene to protect children or adults from physical, mental, or sexual violence. Law on Gender Equality guarantees equality between men and women. This law contains articles regarding sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and other issues. *Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence* aims to prevent

all forms of domestic violence. It is aimed at victims of domestic violence, with a focus on children, elders, and disabled persons. The *Code of Juvenile Justice* regulates procedures and measures against minors, stating that adults shall be held responsible for criminal offenses committed against a child, including sexual integrity. One of the particular objectives of the National Strategy for Protection Against Domestic Violence and Action Plan (2016-2020) is to conduct research on youth aged 18-29 subject to sexual violence until the age of 18. The Council of Europe identified a problem with gender violence in Kosovo*. For that reason, they started working to strengthen Kosovo's* legislative and policy frameworks on violence against women and domestic violence, as well as to build institutional capacities to prevent and counter violence against women and domestic violence.

⁵ Data from February 2022.

Overview of studies

Kadriu (2012) in the study *Prevalence of violence in adolescents' relationships* conducted by Kosovar Centre for Gender Studies on 600 students (aged 16-19, from 54 schools), focused on peer violence, gender-based violence, and sexual violence. Regarding sexual violence perpetrated by adults, 93.3% of survey participants stated that they never experienced sexual violence by adults, and 16.8% stated that adults are violent under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In terms of the types of punishment, 3.4% of youth stated that adults punished them by locking them up or not giving them food, while 17.6% stated that adults punished them by grounding them or taking their phones, and 30.2% stated that adults often shouted. Regarding peer violence, 77.1% of survey participants believed that physical violence was widespread, and 67.8% of children reported they experienced insults and mockery from peers. A large percentage of survey participants reported that students brought various forms of weapons to schools - 44.6% chose knives, 37.4% chose baseball bats, and 18.1% reported students carrying guns to school. Another form of violence, reported by 45.2% of pupils, is students stealing personal belongings. Speaking about the location where peer violence occurs, 85.4% of students stated that the majority of the violence and abuse in school happened in schoolyards while 52.4% said it happened in school hallways, 66% said that violence occurred when students missed class, 64.8% said that it happened between school shifts, 61.1% during breaks, and 55.9% said it happened on their way back from school. The findings on gender-based violence are quite concerning. 40% of girls and 46% of boys find it acceptable for a boyfriend to hit a girlfriend if she cheats, whereas 40% of survey respondents believe that a female is primarily responsible for house chores. 24% of youth believe that if a boy spends a lot of money on his girlfriend, she is expected to have sex with him, and 44% believe that if a person abuses someone while under the

influence of alcohol or drugs, they are not responsible for their wrongdoing. Concerning violence in relationships, 33% of children believe that being beaten by a partner is good for some people, and 40% of them feel that physical violence that occurs in a relationship should be kept between the partners. Furthermore, 66% of respondents believe that a wife should avoid provoking her husband. A significant finding was that 40% of youth believe that a real man is someone active, aggressive, independent, and dominant, while 33% believe that the perfect woman is passive, caring, fragile, and talkative. Another concerning finding is that young people have a wrong perception of violence, with 61% of respondents believing that limiting the time their partner spends with family is not a form of violence, 27% believing that slapping is not violence, 16% believing that hitting is not violence, and 38% believing that yelling is not a form of violence. The same is true for their view of sexual violence, with 31% of respondents believing that pressing on sexual intercourse is not a form of violence. 7% reported that they would use blackmail to force someone into a sexual relationship, while 3% of respondents force their partner into having intercourse. Gallopeni (2020) in *Regional research on violence against children in schools in Southeastern Europe* conducted by Child Protection Hub for Southeast Europe, also focused on youth violence. This research surveyed children aged 13-18, as well as teachers, parents, principals, religious leaders, etc. The data is cumulative and not presented in percentages. The research showed that children in Kosovo* mostly experience bullying, physical violence, and psychological and sexual violence. The majority of the violence occurs on their way to school, or from school going home. They also state that bullying is accompanied by sexual harassment from adolescent boys. Bullying, followed by sexual harassment, is mostly reported by girls aged 16-18. Both girls and boys reported that in the areas where

a lot of people use drugs or alcohol they experience a lot of violence, both physical and psychological. Regarding violence in school, most of the youth stated that the most common form is psychological when peers label other peers. Findings showed that physical violence happens more frequently between boys than between girls. Regarding sexual violence, the study found that it happens in schools. Girls even reported some forms of sexual violence perpetrated on students by their teachers. When the topic of gender roles and gender-based violence was brought up, it was noted that social perception played the most important influence. Girls, for instance, are expected to provide a "spiritual" role, while boys should provide financial support. Armen (2018), in the study *Investigation of Violence Against Children in Schools with Types and Related Variables: Kosovo* Sample*, refers to a study conducted in Pristina with 618 high school

students (aged 15–18). This study showed that 87% of the respondents experienced violence in school at least once. 73.6% of them stated that the most common form of violence was violence against their (or school) property, while 69.3% stated that psychological violence is the most common form of violence, 47.5% find that to be physical violence, and 22.1% stated that sexual violence is the most common type of perpetrated violence. Moreover, the Kosovo* police claimed that there were 351 cases of youth violence in schools reported in 2012, including 64 minor body injuries, nine serious bodily injuries, 10 violence threats, and nine cases of firearms and cold weapon possession. Between March and September 2020, the reported cases of domestic violence increased by about 11%, when compared to the same period in 2019 (Limani, Limani, 2022).

Serbia

The authority in Serbia is divided into three segments – legislative authority lies with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia; the bearer of executive authority is the Government of the Republic of Serbia, consisting of minister cabinets, two Vice-Presidents, and a President; and, lastly, the judicial authority as an independent authority. There are several institutions safeguarding gender equality, slightly touching upon gender-based violence protection. The Council for Gender Equality functions as an expert and advisory body for the Government. The Coordination Body for

Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia coordinates the work of government bodies and considers all issues related to gender equality. On the level of legislative authorities, the Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality suggests improvements in gender equality. Furthermore, Vojvodina as an autonomous province has several bodies dealing with gender equality. Victims most commonly turn to the police, social welfare centers, and safe house when seeking protection after experiencing different forms of violence.

State measures

The Republic of Serbia approaches gender-based violence in various ways and has adopted a variety of documents to combat it. The *National Strategy for the Enhancement*

of Women's Position and Improvement of Gender Equality, adopted in 2009, envisaged a series of activities until 2015, distributed across several specific and individual goals.

There are six specific goals: 1. Achieving the right of women to equal participation in decision-making; 2. Eradicating economic inequalities between men and women, introducing an equal opportunities policy, and making better use of women's resources for development; 3. Establishing gender equality and integrating a gender perspective in education; 4. Preserving and improving women's health and accomplishing gender equality in health policy; 5. Preventing and repelling all forms of gender-based violence, as well as ensuring a comprehensive system of protection for women victims of violence; 6. Establishing gender equality in the media, eliminating gender stereotypes, and eliminating hate speech from the media (misogyny). The general goal of *The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for the Period 2021–2025* is to secure effective prevention and protection from all forms of gender-based violence towards women and girls and domestic violence and to develop a gender-responsible system of support services for victims of violence. The prohibition of peer violence in schools is defined by the *Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System*

and the Rulebook on the Protocol of Actions at an Institution as a Response to Violence, Abuse, and Neglect which defines sexual violence and abuse. Domestic violence was defined as a criminal offense for the first time in the *Family Law* adopted in 2005, while the *Law on Social Protection*, adopted in 2011, defines child protection services, including those related to protection from violence and neglect. The *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence* adopted in 2016 prevents domestic violence and requires efficient, timely, and urgent protection and support for victims of domestic violence. The Republic of Serbia has ratified the UN CEDAW. In 2010, the Republic of Serbia signed the *European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes* (1983), while in 2013 it ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – the Istanbul Convention (2011). In 2015 it adopted UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at solving global challenges. Serbia has several telephone lines that provide help to women victims of domestic or sexual violence, as well as telephone lines where children can report violence in schools, peer violence, or domestic violence.

Overview of studies

A cross-sectional study of physical and psychological violence among youth in Serbia (Obradović-Tomašević, B., et al., 2019), resulting from the secondary analysis of findings from the 2013 National Health Survey of the Republic of Serbia (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2014) conducted with 1567 youth (758 female and 809 male) indicated that just over 14% of boys and girls aged 15–24 experienced domestic violence. The same research has shown that 2.8% of respondents experienced domestic violence and 7% experienced peer violence (psychological and physical violence combined). *Survey on gender-based violence in schools in Serbia* (Ćeriman, et al. 2015) conducted by the Centre for Gender and Politics, Faculty

of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, focuses on GBV in 50 schools across Serbia. The study's findings can be divided into three categories: gender-based violence, peer violence, and sexual violence. Findings show that in the 2013/2014 school year, 69% of primary school pupils (both girls and boys) and 74% of secondary school pupils (both girls and boys) experienced at least one form of GBV by their peers. In primary schools, 34% of boys would invade girls' privacy by peaking in their locker rooms and toilets, while this percentage in secondary schools was 20%. Sexual harassment, in the form of forbidden touching of intimate parts, was reported by 23% of female primary school pupils. The most common forms of violence

are vulgar behavior (41% of respondents), followed by gender prejudice and sexual objectification comments (around 25%). The same study found that when it comes to GBV perpetrated by peers, boys find it more acceptable than girls, and this becomes more apparent as the boys become older. The situation is different for girls. Moreover, boys commit GBV more frequently than girls, and the percentages increase with age. Ćeriman et al., (2015) found that 69% of primary school students and 74% of secondary school students have been exposed to at least one form of GBV. Ignjatović, (2015) showed that in 76.5% of cases of violence, children witnessed violence against their mothers and 45.9% of children were directly subjected to abuse by their fathers. In a study on the welfare and safety of women, conducted by OSCE Serbia in 2018, sexual and physical violence, as well as harassment and stalking, by a non-partner is mostly experienced by younger women (aged 18-29). More than half of women under 30 stated they experienced sexual harassment after they turned 15 (54% compared to 42% of all respondents). In the *National study on the social problem of sexual abuse of children in the Republic of Serbia* (Bogovac, et al. 2015), conducted in 121 schools in Serbia, with 2053 pupils aged 10-18, 50.5% of respondents stated they knew someone who experienced some form of violence - physical 18.3% (63.7% male, 36.3% female), emotional 16.3% (64.9% female, 35.1% male), social 13.3% (55.1% female, 44.9% male), cyber 11.7% (84.6% female, 15.4% male), multiple 10.4% (55.9% female, 44.1% male), and sexual 9.5% (88.5%

female, 11.5% male). The average age for victims of sexual violence is 14 (the youngest child to experience sexual violence was 4 years old!). When it comes to personnel experiencing sexual violence, the same survey shows that 10.8% suffered sexual violence, which increases with age (6.3% in primary schools and 15.1% in secondary schools). M Research (Jakovljević, 2011) on the perception and attitudes surrounding GBV among male secondary school students, conducted in 16 cities in Serbia, among other things explored the prevalence of various forms of violence towards other men and women. The results showed that 26% of the young men who participated in the study experienced some type of peer violence. Verbal and physical violence towards homosexuals is highly prevalent. Reported violence against young women is lower than violence against homosexuals. According to Autonomous Women's Center Belgrade (2020), during the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic, three times as many women called the SOS helpline to report cases of domestic violence, with only a few registered cases of femicide. Autonomous Women's Center (2018) conducted field research on the perception and experience of youth with sexual harassment, which involved 602 youth, 70% females and 30% males aged 18-30 (47.4% aged 18-24, 52.6% aged 25-30). 60% of survey participants claim to have been called inappropriate names, 54% say they have gotten a phone call or text with a sexual connotation, and 26.3% say they have witnessed someone self-touch.

Conclusions

In this report, we tried to analyze the relationship between policies that touch upon peer violence, gender-based violence, and sexual violence in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia. We also attempted to identify similarities between countries in terms of the mentioned types of violence among youth.

There are not many studies on peer, GBV, or sexual violence that separate data for youth, but the available findings are sufficient to draw a comparison between the countries and make some conclusions. Furthermore, there is a lack of youth-oriented data on all forms of violence, which negatively affects policymaking and planning and prevents evidence-based policymaking in this field. We can see that youth violence, in the form of peer violence, gender-based violence, and sexual violence, is an evident and emerging problem in all countries.

Gender-based violence is prevalent across all five territories. Several campaigns to raise awareness about the protection, prevention, and sanctioning of GBV have been implemented in all countries, and while some progress has been made, the presence of GBV remains high. More so, the analysis showed that Kosovo* requires additional effort in this area.

Peer violence is also prevalent, and it rises with the age of the perpetrators. Kosovo* has very high rates of peer violence.

The presence of sexual violence was confirmed in all countries. As a reference, one study in Albania showed that a significant number of young women under the age of 14 reported sexual violence. On the other hand, somewhat more than 40% of perpetrators were convicted. Another unfortunate fact is that when asked about their attitudes toward sexual violence, youth often regard it as normal (justifying it as normal for a male partner to force himself on a young woman if in an intimate relationship). This suggests that work must be done to increase awareness among youth on what sexual violence is and how to recognize it, as well as to establish preventive measures. It would be beneficial to organize age-appropriate programs for primary and secondary school pupils to address this issue.

Purpose of the study and Object- ives

**Purpose
of the study
and
Objectives**



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of Program Y in its key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention of sexual violence, covering the period 2014-2020. The study further aims to identify the methods and approaches that have contributed to its success, as well as to present obstacles and limitations. The purpose is not only to identify WHAT the key accomplishments have been so far but also HOW they have manifested and WHY they have occurred.

On the one hand, the lessons learned will provide CARE and its partners with a valuable learning resource for program improvement and scaling up. On the other hand, it will directly contribute to the Young Men Initiative Future4Youth Movement that aims to unite diverse voices from civil society, informal citizens groups, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders around the same goal – to address and advocate for violence prevention, gender equality, life skills, and health education (including sex education as an integral part) in schools across the Balkans.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the impact study is to identify the changes in young people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in the period of 2014-2020 in the following key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention of sexual violence (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo*, and Albania), as a result of the direct engagement of CARE and partners. The study will describe how and why the identified changes occurred.

CARE intends to discover the level and type of impact in the following three domains, all of which are linked with the five key areas stated above:

1. Change in the level of knowledge, skills, and confidence of high school boys and girls, as a result of their direct participation in Program Y school-based workshops, school and/or community-based campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs.
2. Change in the attitudes and behaviors of high school boys and girls as a result of their participation in school-based workshops, campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs, as well as in their capacity to adequately respond to violence happening to them or others.
3. Methods and approaches that were most effective in the given context and circumstances.

A photograph of two young women sitting on a rooftop, laughing heartily. They are wearing dark t-shirts with the text 'Budi MUSA KLUAT' and a paw print logo. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text 'Methodological approach' is written in white on the left side, and 'Methodological approach' is written in white on the right side.

Methodo- logical approach

Methodological
approach

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Study design and approach

The evaluation entailed the application of various quantitative and qualitative research methods, including analysis of various types of documents (research reports, policies, etc.) and the implementation of a number of interviews and focus groups.

This impact study consists of several components providing a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the preventative tools, methods, and approaches used through Program Y in the given context and between 2014 and 2020. These methods include context overview, desk analysis, and interviews.

1. Context overview: A brief regional analysis and country overview on peer, gender-based, and sexual violence among youth between 14 and 19 years of age in Serbia, Kosovo*, Albania, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the analysis describes the state measures in place at the national, cantonal, and local levels that ensure the prevention of all forms of violence.

2. Desk analysis: A review of the data gathered through a series of school-based evaluations and project-related studies and reports in the period 2014-2020. In each project phase, researchers and the YMI team gathered relevant data and inputs through School Baseline Assessments implemented at the beginning of each project cycle and School Endline Evaluations conducted at the end. These separate research reports were analyzed and used to present the impact of Program Y on youth in the five mentioned areas, along with other project reports and final project evaluations.

3. Interviews: Organization of interviews with former and current program participants and key stakeholders. This entailed:

- a. Focus groups with users who participated in Program Y, which is being implemented in secondary schools,
- b. Individual or group interviews with representatives of the school staff (principals, pedagogues, and teachers) or other stakeholders.

Methodological features of desktop analysis

The program was implemented in two phases: the first phase was from 2014 to 2017, and the second phase was from 2017 to 2020. In each phase, the program was implemented in two different geographical focuses: one in the regional context (BiH (Banja Luka), Serbia (Belgrade), Kosovo* (Pristina), Albania (Tirana)); and the other only in BiH (Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar), including the municipalities East Sarajevo, Jablanica, Knezevo, Bijeljina, Brcko, Tuzla, Novi Travnik, Visoko, Vlasenica. Each phase was followed by an evaluation. The evaluation of implemented programs included self-administered quantitative surveys completed by participants before and after the intervention program. The survey was conducted in several phases that were repeated twice: from 2014 to 2017, and from 2017 until 2020. Each time, the first phase of the survey involved conducting a

baseline survey. During the second phase, the majority of the young men and women took part in Program Y, an educational (intervention) program that included group experiential workshops and campaign activities organized by Be a Man Clubs. During the third phase, the endline survey was carried out. This research method allows us to compare results before and after the intervention program to see whether there has been a change in participants. A key part of the desktop analysis is the analysis of reports from the previous period. The analysis should show the effects of project interventions within the following research areas: gender attitudes, violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, alcohol and drug abuse, and prevention of sexual violence. It should also show which methods are the most effective.

Participants

Research respondents were young men and women (Phase 2 only), aged 15-18 years, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo*, and Albania. The project has been divided into the regional and BiH local

components, with the regional component targeting only one city – Tirana, Banja Luka, Pristina, and Belgrade – and the BiH local component surveying several major and small cities.

	Regional component				BiH - local
	Albania	BiH	Kosovo*	Serbia	Several cities
Phase 1	375	377	16	180	1292 ⁶
Phase 2	260	149	105	165	1216 ⁷

⁶ Besides the Sarajevo, Mostar, and Banja Luka program form, the program was implemented in a shorter form in several other cities: Bijeljina, Gradiska, East Sarajevo, Jablanica, Knezevo, Novi Travnik, Visoko and Vlasenica. A total of 1,292 respondents were examined in Phase 1 in BiH.

⁷ Locations where Phase 2 research in BiH was conducted include: Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Bijeljina, Brcko, East Sarajevo, Jablanica, Novi Travnik, and Tuzla. In the endline survey, 1216 respondents (590 young men and 626 young women), from all project target schools where intervention was implemented, filled-in the survey.

Instruments

Respondents filled in the questionnaires (pen-paper method). The questionnaire was divided into several sections to gather information for the evaluation, as well as establish a common understanding of the situation of these young men and women. The sections were the following:

- General background information: questions about family, home, demographics, and socioeconomics;
- Gender relations, views about men and women: 17 main statements from the GEM Scale (Pulerwitz, Barker, 2008). The GEM Scale is a widely used instrument that has shown tremendous reliability in assessing to what degree men and women “buy into” or support an inequitable view or a more equitable view of male-female relations. Statements range from those about roles of men and women at home, in relationships, acceptance of violence against women, and attitudes towards homosexuality;
- Health: questions about health-seeking behaviors, smoking, alcohol, and substance (ab)use; knowledge questions about sexual reproductive health, attitudes towards contraception, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections (STI).

Intervention program

CARE Balkans launched the Young Men Initiative (YMI) in 2006, a program designed to build more equitable attitudes and behaviors among young men and reduce both gender and peer violence. The core of the YMI intervention is the Program Y(outh) Educational Toolkit, which includes a series of group educational workshops accompanied by social norms campaign that promote a critical and personal reflection on gender, masculinity, and health, with a strong focus on violence prevention. YMI

- Questions about experienced and perpetrated violence, gender-based violence, violence in a relationship;
- Participation in program intervention activities (workshops, Be a Man Clubs - BMCs, exposure to campaign activities, etc.).

The endline questionnaire included a detailed section on program exposure designed to measure participants’ engagement in YMI and how they valued various program activities. The same instruments were used for young men and women. The questionnaire was changed only in Tirana. Due to the decision made by the ministry officials, four questions related to knowledge of sexual-reproductive health, sexual experiences, and violence experienced in the past, were removed. We encountered the same issue during the baseline study as well.

worked with young men and women aged 15-19 in schools to discuss and critically reflect on issues such as masculinity, gender norms, sexuality, and violence, through both educational workshops and pro-social lifestyles campaigns. YMI’s main intervention points included group experiential workshops based on the Program Y Toolkit and the Be a Man Club campaign activities in schools and communities, as well as a number of other campaigns. Implementing staff participated in the program and campaign design, and

facilitators were trained together to help ensure consistency across cities. In each of the schools, a similar set of activities was implemented, including:

- **Group Educational Workshops.** YMI developed a core list of workshops from the Program Y Toolkit (up to 19) that were conducted over several months with groups of young men and women. Workshop sessions addressed multiple topics, including What is This Gender; Expressing Emotions; Labeling; *What Is Sexual Violence; Anger Management; From Violence to Respect in Intimate Relationships; Sexual Health; Drugs And Alcohol Use; Peer Violence And Violence Against Women;* etc. Sessions included interactive approaches that encouraged dialogue and reflection by participants.
- **Be a Man Clubs and Campaigns** – Be a Man Clubs are established as clubs for high school students engaged creatively in the design and implementation of the “Be a Man” campaign and represent its most significant part. Be a Man Clubs are not for young men only; they include both

young men and women, with the goal of building healthy lifestyles for all of them. Lifestyles, social norms, and violence prevention campaigns were developed in close collaboration between local partners and young men and women from all project countries. Some of them include “Are U OK”, “Be a Man”, and “Respond as a Human.” Campaign activities and materials were presented in schools and reinforced many of the topics addressed in the workshops, including mental health, sexual health (e.g. promoting condom use), violence prevention, and more gender-equitable norms. Some of the activities were flash mob actions, conference, workshops, videos, lectures, etc. Several materials were developed, including posters, t-shirts and brochures. Activities were open to all young people in the schools and were often organized around significant days (Celebrating 16 Days of Activism; Celebrating 8th of March; Celebrating 12th of August – International Youth Day) in order to hold educational and entertaining activities, including quizzes, music contests, graffiti art, and street fairs.

Characteristics of interviews and focus groups

This component of the study was conducted through six focus groups and 10 semi-structured interviews (from all territories) with key respondents (KRs) and stakeholders, to gather qualitative data in order to understand the impact of program activities. A total of 41 individuals were interviewed. Former members of YMI were surveyed in focus groups, while other stakeholders were interviewed individually or in pairs. All survey instruments were tested before being evaluated and finalized. They can be found in Annex A.

The interviews were conducted online. Focus groups lasted 90-120 minutes, while interviews lasted 60-90 minutes. Each evaluation phase was implemented following ethical standards, meaning that the principles of volunteerism, privacy, and anonymity were respected during focus groups and interviews. The participants first gave consent and confirmed voluntary participation in the research. The focus groups and interviews were held in December 2022.

The list of conducted interviews can be found in Annex B.

FINDING OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As mentioned above, the impact study focused on the five key areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse; and (5) prevention of sexual violence. We will present the findings from

both phases of the Program, per city. The findings of earlier quantitative studies will be supplemented with information from conducted focus groups and interviews. The end of each key area section has a conclusion about the impact.

Gender attitudes

To understand the impact of the Y Program on the gender attitudes of young people, it is useful to note that this key area was covered within the general topic of gender relations.

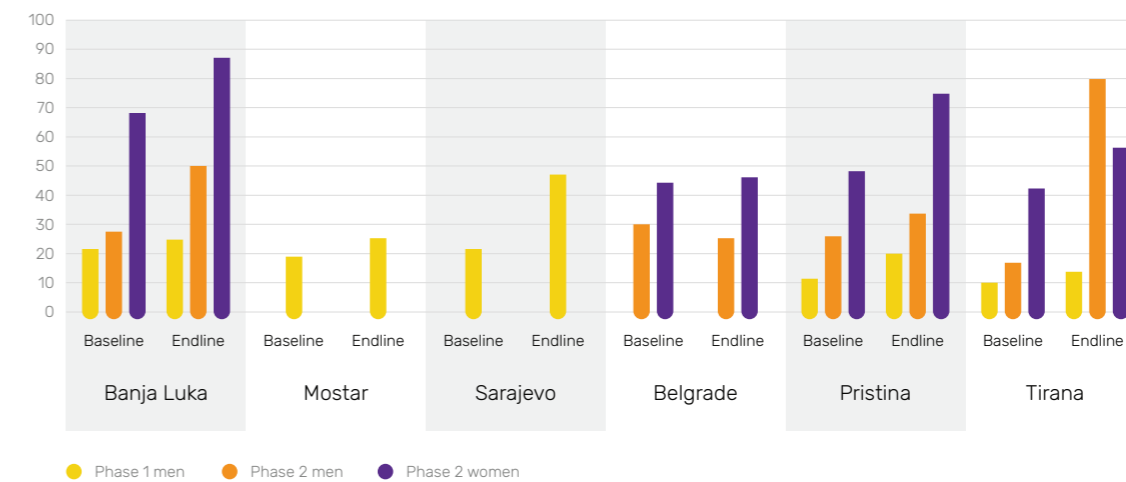
Household activities

We start this section by providing summarized graphs for the participation of youth in household chores, like washing clothes, fixing and repairing household devices and appliances, and cooking (Graph

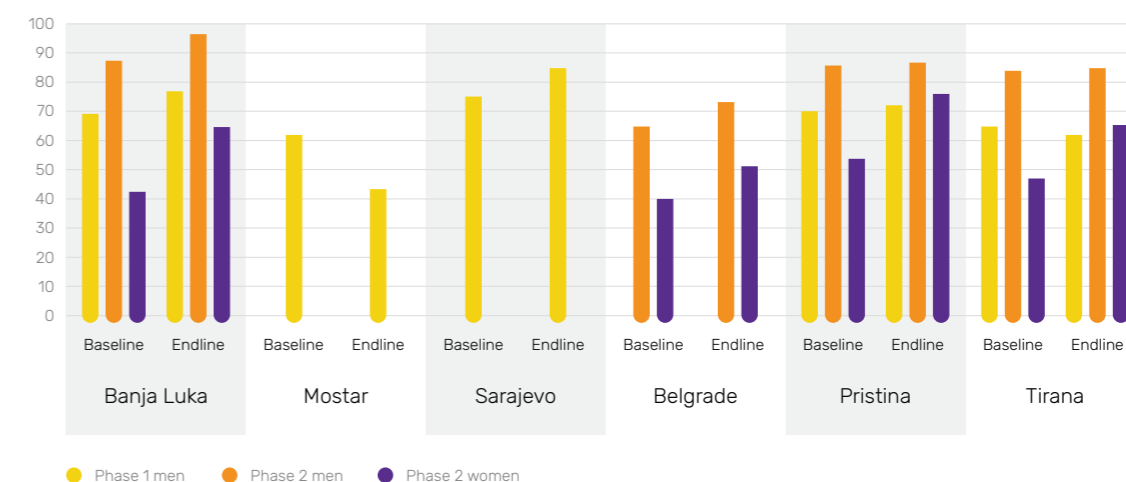
Under this general topic, the specific issues of household activities, gender roles, gender norms, and homophobia were assessed.

1, Graph 2, and Graph 3). In some stages of the research, the questionnaire was adapted in Mostar, Sarajevo, and Belgrade, thus some data for these cities are missing

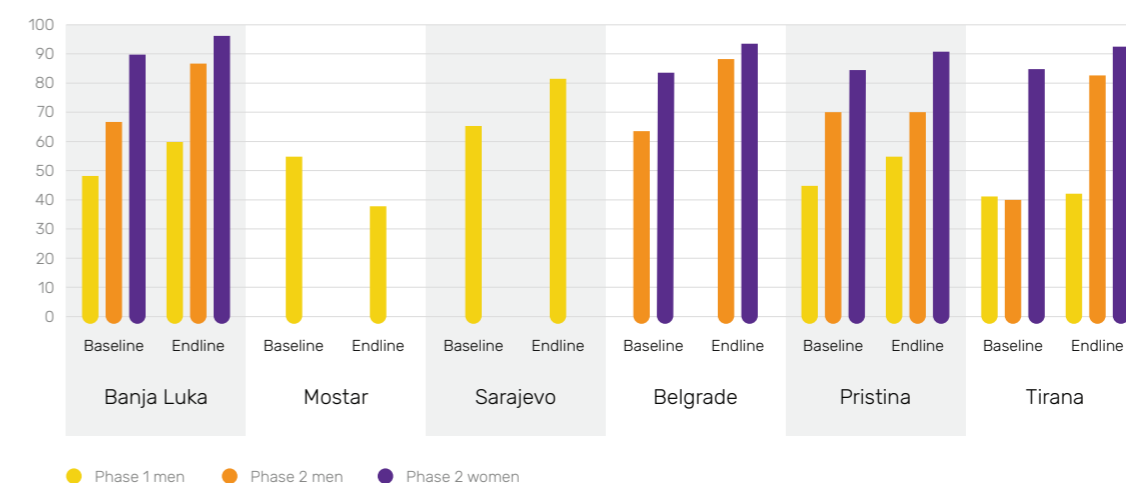
Graph 1. | Washing clothes



Graph 2. | Fixing or repairing



Graph 3. | Cooking food



In Phase 1, questions concerning household activities were removed from the questionnaire administered in Belgrade. The overall data from Phase 1 shows a higher level (up to almost 10%) of household chores participation of young men (cooking, cleaning, and fixing and repairing) in Pristina and Tirana after the intervention. The percentage of young men from Pristina and Tirana who participated in washing clothes stayed below 20%, despite this increase in participation (Graph 1). Significant progress was made in Sarajevo, where the participation of young men in washing clothes rose from 21.6% to 46.6% (Graph 1).

When we compare different household activities, we see the highest levels of participation of young men in fixing or repairing home appliances and devices (Graph 2). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, data

Summary of household activities for partners in BiH

In Phase 1, there was some improvement regarding household activities that went up by 10%. That was especially visible in the

Conclusion on household activities

Generally, regardless of the impact of the Y Program, young men showed the highest level of participation in activities such as cleaning the house and fixing and repairing, and the lowest in washing clothes. The Y Program had the strongest impact on young men in terms of cooking (Graph 3) and washing clothes, and on young women in terms of fixing and repairing home devices. In addition, it is worth noting that the endline results in Phase 1 are lower than the baseline findings in Phase 2, meaning that there have been changes between 2016 and 2018.

for Banja Luka and Sarajevo indicates a higher overall level (up to 23%) of household activities; however, this is not the case in Mostar, where young men show lower involvement in the endline survey (e.g. -26% for caring about younger sibling).

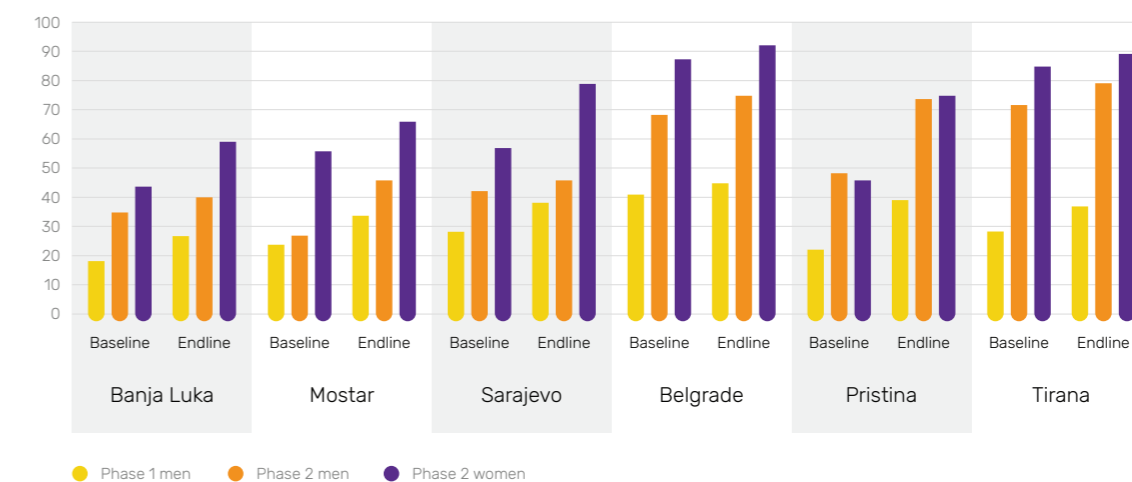
In Phase 2, young men still had the lowest level of participation in washing clothes (Graph 1), except for Tirana, where we observed an increase of almost 63%, which was also the highest impact measured for participation in household activities. In Phase 2, besides young men, the survey included young women and allowed us to observe gender differences. We can see that young women in general already show a high level of participation in household activities, with the exception of fixing and repairing (Graph 2), so the strongest impact on young women is related to this aspect.

cities of Novi Travnik, Vlasenica, and Knezevo. This data was not measured in the second phase of the research in BiH.

Reports indicate the overall positive impact that Y Program has had on both the skills and behaviors of youth. Young men participate more (up to 63%) in household activities traditionally assigned to the female gender, and young women participated more in activities traditionally assigned to the male gender. This indirectly shows the impact on gender roles as well.

Gender roles

Graph 4. | Gender roles equality index



Gender roles were assessed as a part of assessing gender attitudes. As shown in Phase 1, an increase in equality and tolerance was observed in all cities (Graph 4). The highest level of gender equality was observed in Belgrade (41% to 45%), and the lowest in Pristina (from 22% to 39%). In Pristina, we also observed the greatest change in attitudes (17%) related to gender equality.

In Phase 2, we can again observe that the baseline results for young men were higher than the endline results in Phase 1. Once again, the strongest impact on attitudes about gender equality was seen in Pristina, where the percentage of young men with a

positive attitude rose from 48.5% to 74.6%, and are now similar to findings in Belgrade (74.1%) and Tirana (78.8%). On average, less than half of young men in BiH express gender equality attitudes (~45%). For young women in BiH, the strongest impact was measured in Banja Luka (from 43.8% to 59.1%). The most notable positive overall impact on both young men and women was on attitudes toward the role of women in homemaking, cooking, and taking care of children, and, particularly in Pristina and Tirana, on men having the last say in a home. We can observe that both young men and women agree that pregnancy is a shared responsibility.

Summary of gender roles for partners in BiH

Attitudes toward gender roles improved in all cities, in both phases, among both young men and young women. The percentage of improvement went up to 62% and was strongest in Visoko in Phase 1. During this phase, there was also a big change in

Jablanica (16%), Knezevo (17%), and Vlasenica (16%), all of which included young women. Bijeljina (25%), Brcko (19%), and Tuzla (22%) saw the highest progress with young men in Phase 2.

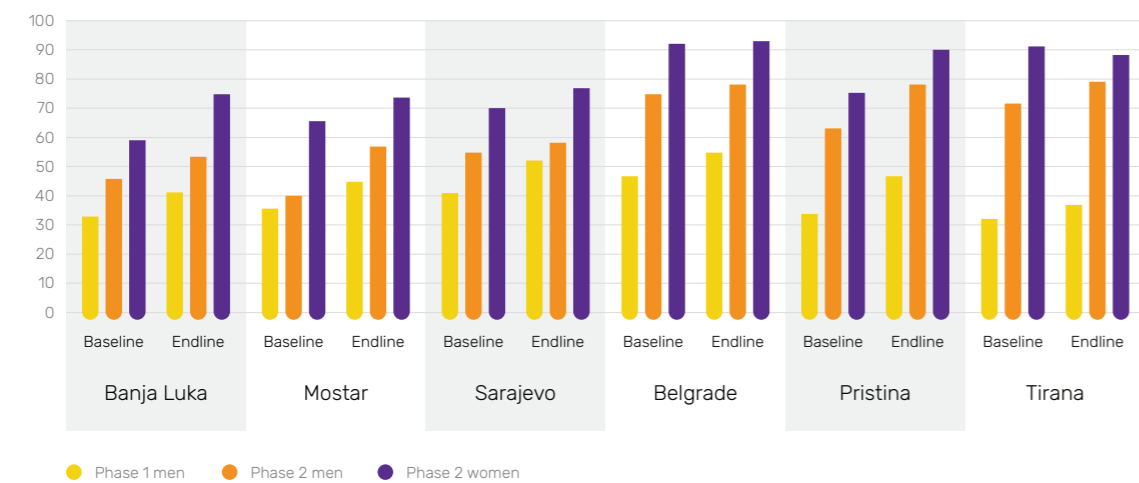
Conclusion on gender roles

In addition to the impact on household activities, we can see that Program Y affected both the level of involvement in household activities (level of skills and behaviors) and the attitudes toward gender roles and responsibilities. The program in

general had an impact on young people, but we need to take the context into account because we saw different results in different cities. Certain social characteristics, such as the size of a city, can influence the overall environment related to gender relations.

Gender norms

Graph 5. | Gender norms equality index



In Phase 1, we saw that the attitudes toward gender norms in the endline survey became more gender equitable in all cities (Graph 5). Progress in comparison to the baseline survey was 2%-17%. The greatest progress was observed in Pristina (from 35% to 47%), and the lowest was in Tirana (from 35% to 37%).

In Phase 2, we saw various results, but when summarized, these findings indicate that young men and women agree that it is generally acceptable for men to cry and show emotions in front of others. Overall, the highest positive impact was observed

in their perception of whether it was more acceptable for a boy to skip class than a girl, where we saw fewer hegemonic attitudes. In Mostar, we measured the strongest impact on young men, where positive attitudes varied from 40.1% to 57.1%. Overall, on average, around half of young men in BiH express gender equality attitudes (~55%), and their gender norms are around 10% more tolerant. We observed a similar increase for young women in BiH, from ~60% to ~70%. After the intervention, positive attitudes of young men in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana are around 77%, whereas those of young women are around 90%.

Summary of gender norms for partners in BiH local

In Phase 1, in terms of gender norms, greater progress was achieved with young women in the endline research in Knezevo and Novi Travnik. With young men, the findings were almost the same, remaining at a very low level. In Visoko and Jablanica, both young men and women exhibited greater gender equality in the endline research. The percentage of progress ranges from 2% to 49%, with Visoko showing the greatest

progress in terms of attitudes of young men toward gender norms, at 49%.

In Phase 2, attitudes toward gender norms in all cities were more gender-equitable in the endline survey. In Bijeljina, the progress increased by 23% with young women. As for young men, the biggest progress was observed in Bijeljina, Brcko, and East Sarajevo, increasing by 14%.

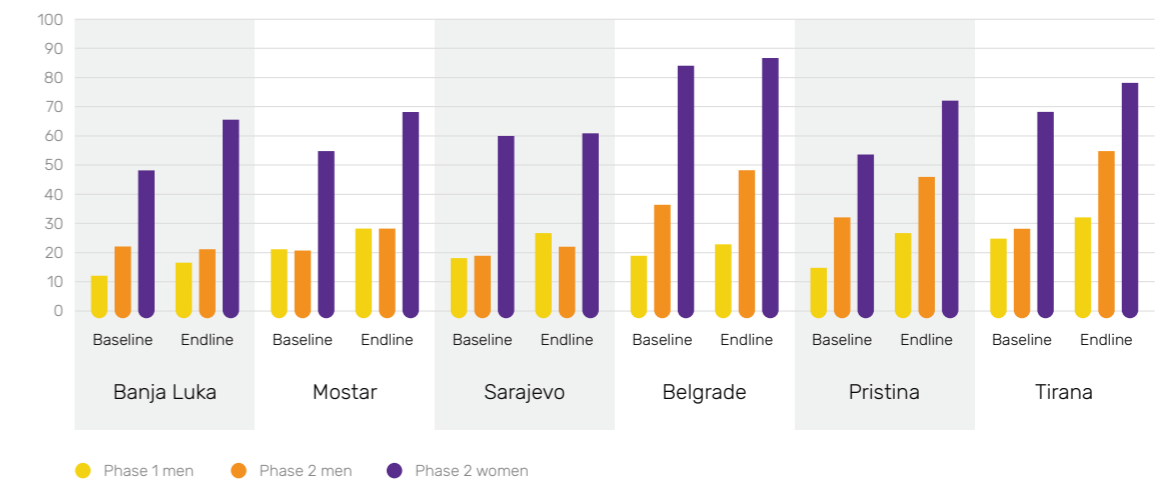
Conclusion on gender norms

Compared to gender roles, attitudes toward gender norms were more open-minded. In general, norms in Phase 2 are more gender equal than in phase 1. In both phases, we saw

that attitudes about gender norms in the final survey are more equitable in all cities (Graph 5). In most cities, progress compared to basic research was 20%.

Homophobia

Graph 6. | Negative attitudes toward homophobia



In Phase 1, we found high levels of homophobia among young men (Graph 6). The questions were structured so that lower percentages meant higher homophobia. Even after intervention and an observed positive impact on attitudes, there was still a high level of homophobia, the highest being in Banja Luka. Around 72.3% of young men have homophobic attitudes, but the intervention had an ~8% positive effect.

In Phase 2, a shift in results was observed. Since young women were included, we found a major difference between men and women in terms of openness to having a gay friend, with the majority of young men stating they would not accept having a gay friend, even after the intervention (except in Tirana, where we saw an increase for this question from 5.2% to 35.3%). We found that young males in BiH tend to be more homophobic

Summary of homophobia for partners in BiH local

At the end of Phase 1 (2017), most cities had lower levels of homophobia than at the beginning of Phase 1 (2014). The biggest progress (71%) was made by young men in Visoko.

Conclusion on homophobia

The participants exhibited significant levels of homophobia in both phases. This was even more noticeable in young males than in young women. Interventions reduced that level to a certain extent, but the percentages

that in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana. For comparison, around 25% of young men in BiH have negative attitudes toward homophobia, whereas this percentage is around 50% in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana. The strongest impact of the intervention was measured in Tirana (increasing from 28.7% to 55.3%). Young women in general are more negative towards homophobia, but there is still a difference between young women in BiH (with ~60% having negative attitudes toward homophobia) and young women in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana (with ~78% having negative attitudes toward homophobia). The strongest effect on young women was measured in Pristina (from 54.5% to 70.6%).

Overall, the most positive impact was observed in the attitudes of young men concerning physical violence against gay persons.

In Phase 2, attitudes about homophobia were more negative in all cities in the endline survey. The index of negative attitudes toward homophobia among young men in the endline survey ranged from 5-21%. So, we can see that numerous stereotypes about homosexual persons remain.

are still alarming. In the general context of gender relations, homophobia is the most problematic aspect, so it is important to continue working on this form of intolerance.

Results from focus groups and interviews on the impact of the program on gender attitudes

In the following text, we will present the most significant findings from the focus groups and interviews, accompanied by revealing quotes from the participants.

Statements by participants in interviews and focus groups pointed out the fact that the program made a significant impact in the area of gender relations. Some participants stated that the program had the greatest impact on them in this area. This was

particularly noticeable in vocational schools, where there were no other subjects (e.g. biology) where they could talk about these issues. The fact that gender relations was the first topic discussed and received a lot of attention affected the program's impact. Additionally, the Program provided a safe space in which they could openly discuss gender relations without being judged or laughed at.



The biggest impact was made in the area of gender norms because that is what we dealt with the most. The youth changed their behavior. It is now okay to be different and think differently."

(F, program participant, Banja Luka)



The program's impact on gender relations was achieved and manifested in various ways:

- Better understanding of the differences between gender and sex;
- Reduced stereotypes on gender roles of men and women;
- Greater participation of young men in house choirs;
- Greater acceptance of homosexual persons;
- Different perceptions of marriage relationships, etc.

This is evident from the participants' statements:



A number of parents came to school because they'd noticed a change in their children. They asked what had happened. Young men started doing house chores and became more tolerant towards each other.

(M, school representative, Kosovo*)

The Program impacted my attitudes and behavior towards gender. For example, it affected the gender stereotypes I had about professions. I now think that a person's position in society, in any sphere, cannot depend on gender. Some feel that being a surgeon is a man's job, but there are many great female surgeons.

(M, program participant, Banja Luka, BiH)

People stopped dividing tasks into male and female. We understood we were born with some differences, but that has nothing to do with intelligence, capabilities, etc.

(M, program participant, Croatia)

During the Program, I changed my attitude toward marriage. I used to have traditional views. I believed men should work outside of the home, and women in the home. I noticed a great change during the Program.

(F, program participant, Sarajevo, BiH)

During the Program, some female students started to reveal their homosexual orientation. It is still more difficult to confide in boys.

(F, school representative, Serbia)



Conclusions on gender attitudes

The reports allowed us to identify differences in gender attitudes on several levels: the differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the attitudes between the two phases, and the attitudes after the program. Looking at each phase separately, we see a positive trend in increasing gender equality as a result of the intervention, ranging from 2% to 30% in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. This level

of impact was seen in the level of norms, attitudes, and behaviors of young people. On the other hand, when we compare the two projects, we see that regardless of the intervention, there is a greater level of gender equality among young men in Phase 2. This difference could be attributed to the intervention, but also to several factors that were not included in the study. We

see that young women are more oriented toward gender equality than young men. This is why the impact on young males tends to be stronger, as women already have a significantly higher level of gender-equitable attitudes. This is also why we regard the increased participation of young women in

household activities traditionally assigned to men as a result of the program's impact. The results of quantitative research were confirmed in interviews and focus groups. Participants stated that this was probably the area where the biggest impact had been made.



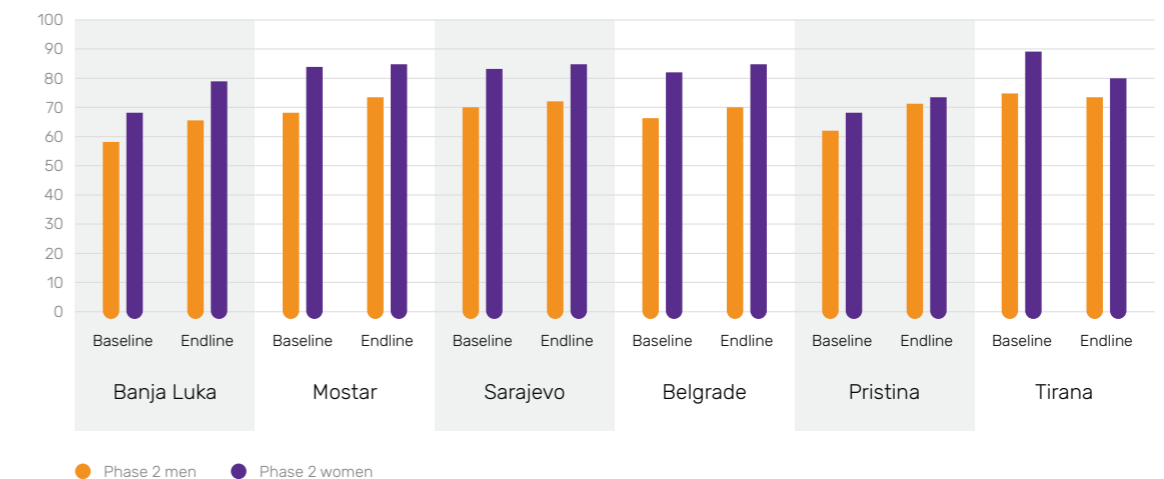
Violence prevention

Within the key area of violence prevention, we covered the topics of peer violence, gender-based violence, violence against homosexuals, and reaction to violence.

We will begin by examining peer violence in terms of the general attitude towards violence and perpetrated emotional and physical violence.

Peer violence

Graph 7. | Negative attitudes toward violence



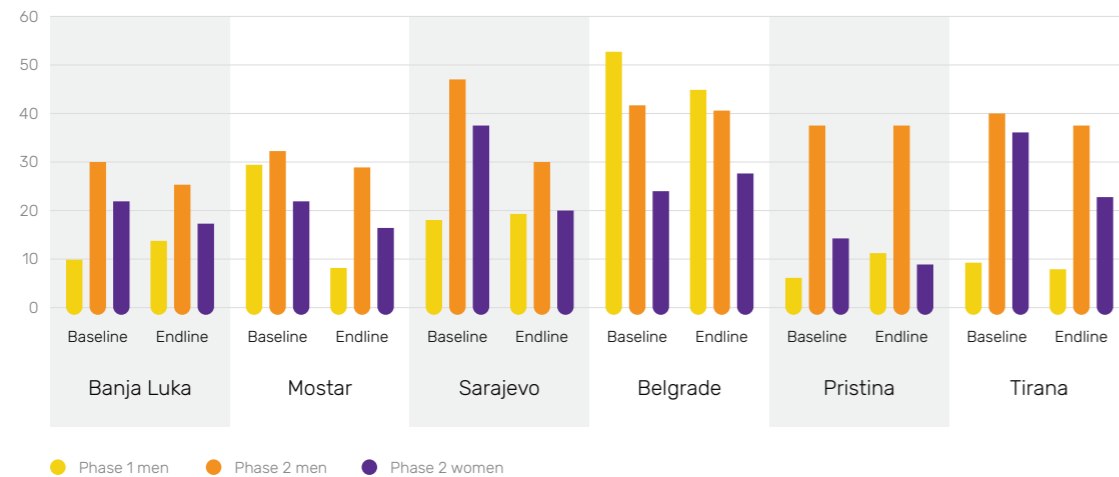
In this graph, we can see the relationship and attitudes of respondents toward violence. We only presented results from Phase 2 as this question was not included in the survey used in Phase 1.

In most cases, around 10% of respondents had more negative attitudes toward violence in the endline phase than in the baseline phase.

At the endline of Phase 2, more than 65% of young men had generally negative attitudes toward violence (Graph 7). Other elements in the reports we analyzed were also useful. For example, 60%-70% of young males in the endline study believed that a single slap is a form of violence. 60%-80% of young women have the same attitudes. These results show that 20%-40% of youth have the wrong perception and minimize the gravity of slapping as a form of physical violence. It is similar in the case of verbal insults. 67%-83% of young men and 71%-87% of young

women believe that verbal insults are a form of violence. In other words, a considerable percentage of young men (17%-37%) and young women (13%-29%) do not perceive verbal and psychological violence as actual violence. Wrong perception of violence can result in increased violent behavior and tolerance of it. As already said, a positive aspect is that in the majority of cases, attitudes towards violence in the endline research were more mature than in the baseline.

Graph 8. | Perpetrated emotional violence toward peers



An overview of perpetrated emotional violence in Phase 1 shows that the highest level of emotional violence is present in Belgrade (Graph 8). Even after the intervention, around 45% of young men from Belgrade stated that they verbally insulted someone. We noticed a significant decrease in perpetrated violence in Mostar (from 30% to 9%). This means that, except in Belgrade, emotional violence is employed by less than 20% of young men. The results suggested that while emotional violence significantly decreased in Belgrade during the endline survey period, it increased in Pristina. In

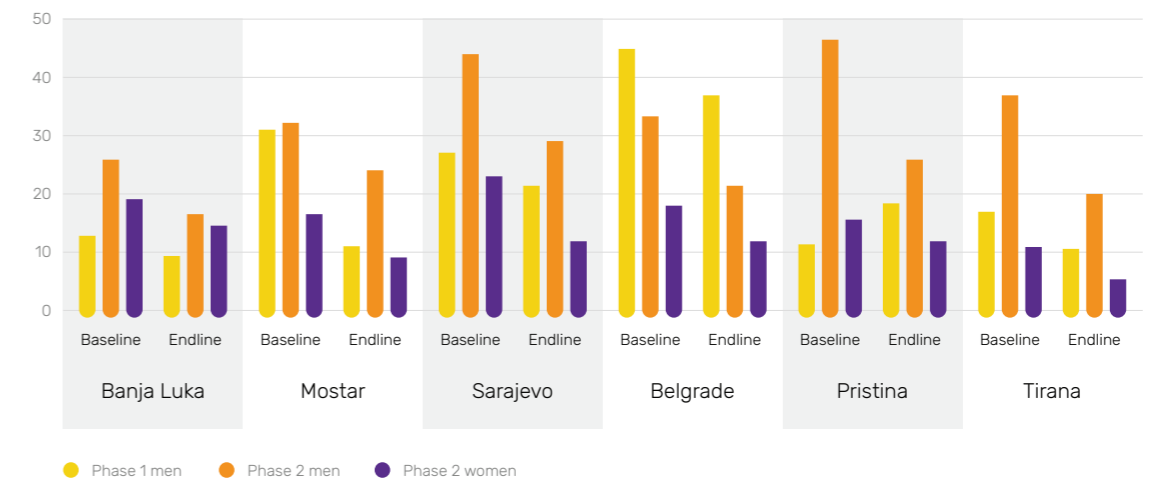
Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Tirana, it remained almost the same.

Even though there was a higher percentage of perpetrated emotional violence in Phase 2 compared to Phase 1 (Graph 8), there were some significant decreases in Phase 2 when comparing baseline and endline results, as was seen in young men in Sarajevo (from 45.3% to 30.5%). Young women showed a greater decrease in perpetrated emotional violence, but not young women from Belgrade. The intervention had almost no effect on men and women in Belgrade and

Tirana. Young people from BiH, on average, showed lower levels of perpetrated emotional violence. We can point out that in the majority of cases, emotional violence in the

endline research is slightly lower, which can be attributed to the effect of the program on attitudes and behavior.

Graph 9. | Perpetrated physical violence toward peers



When it comes to perpetrated physical violence in the given period of three months of intervention, we see that in both phases intervention had a positive impact on young men and women (except in Pristina in Phase 1, where we found a negative effect).

In Phase 1, the strongest impact on young men was observed in Mostar (from 30.8% to 11.8%). There are also significant differences in the degree of perpetrated physical violence

perpetrated by young men between cities. It seems that the bigger the city the higher the level of perpetrated violence against peers.

In Phase 2, we found that in the final phase of the research physical violence had decreased in all cities. Changes are especially noticeable among young men, with the highest change observed in Pristina (from 46.4% to 25.4%). Physical violence among young women reduced by 3%-8%, especially in BiH.

Summary of peer violence for partners in BiH local

In Phase 1, both young men and young women in Visoko, Novi Travnik, Vlasenica, and Bijeljina demonstrated lower participation in violence in the endline research. In baseline and endline research, violence was not found among young women in Jablanica and Visoko. For young men in Visoko, it fell to zero (from 14%). The biggest progress in terms

of not perpetrating emotional violence was observed with young men in Vlasenica (67%).

In Phase 2, the biggest change in the forms of violence perpetrated by young men was in Bijeljina, with a 17.4% decrease in perpetrating emotional violence and a 24.8% decrease in perpetrating physical violence. In all

cities, the progress for perpetrating physical violence compared to the baseline survey was 8%-25% among young men and 8-9% among young women. When we compare

the baseline and endline surveys, the results for perpetrating emotional violence are not consistent. The greatest progress was made in Bijeljina (17%) and Jablanica (14%).

Conclusion on peer violence

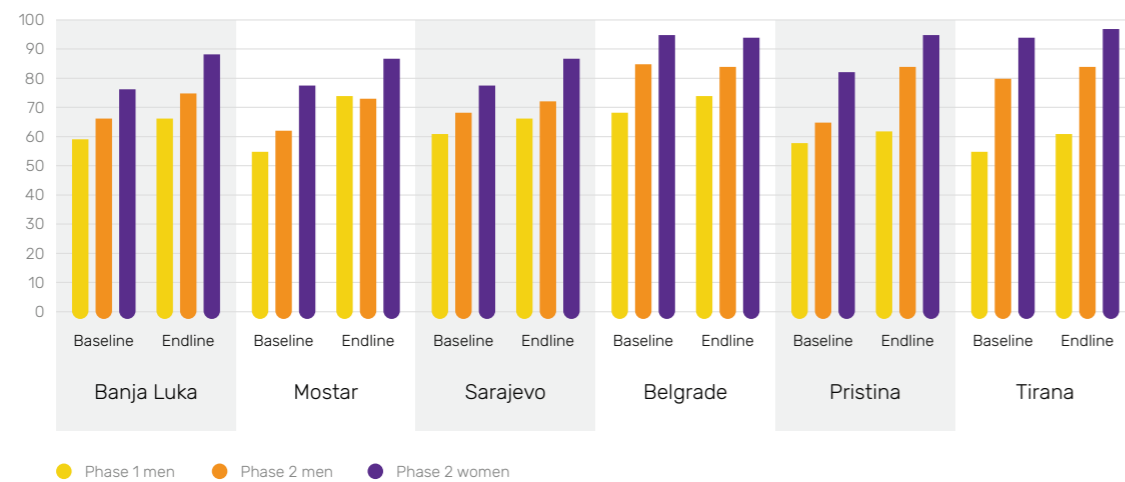
These findings, as well as positive changes in all cities, indicate that the intervention had a positive effect on the attitudes toward violence and decreased violent behavior toward peers. It seems that the intervention had the strongest impact on perpetrated physical violence against peers, while

emotional violence was only slightly lower in the endline research. Despite the progress, a noticeable percentage of young men and young women do not perceive verbal and psychological violence as actual violence, which means that additional work needs to be done in this regard.

Gender-based violence

Within the context of gender-based violence, we analyzed attitudes toward gender-based violence and relationship violence.

Graph 10. | Negative attitudes toward gender-based violence



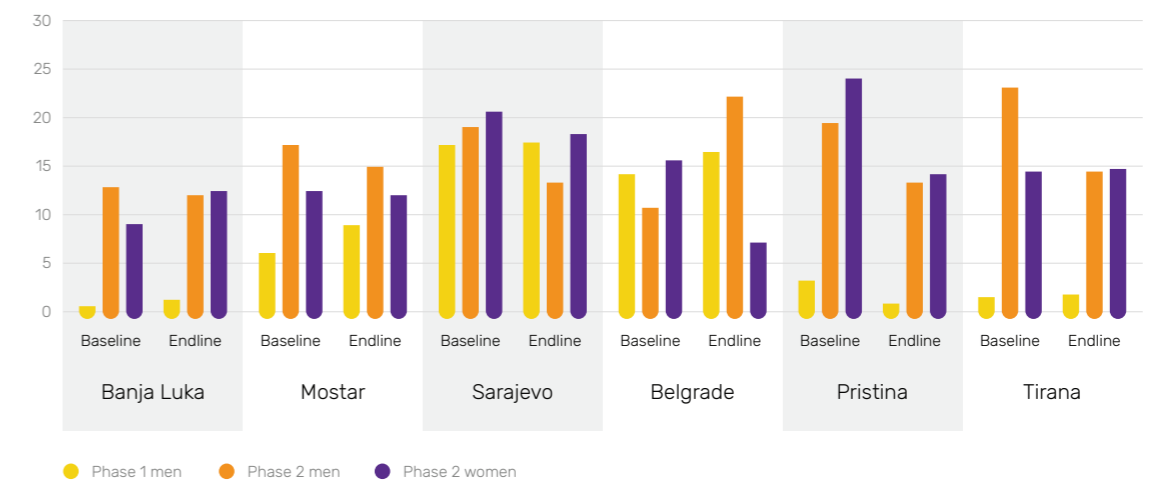
If we compare the baseline and endline surveys in both Phase 1 and Phase 2, we can see that attitudes toward gender-based violence were more negative in all cities in the endline survey (Graph 10). We see that most young men, and especially young women, condemn violent behavior based on gender. This indicates a positive impact of Program Y in terms of the change in attitudes toward gender-based violence in young men and women.

For Phase 1, compared with the baseline research, the progress was 3%-18%. The strongest positive change in attitudes was registered in Mostar (from 55.4% to 73.5%), and the weakest in Pristina (from 58% to 61%). Generally, we see in Phase 1 that the number of young men who condemned GBV is greater than 50% in all cities.

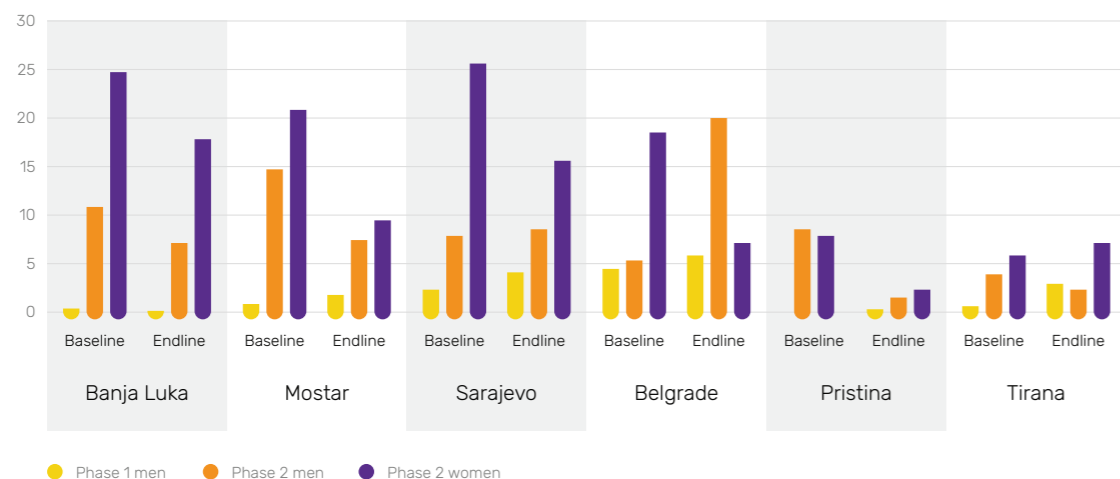
In Phase 2, we also measured the intervention's positive impact (except in Belgrade, where we found a negligible negative effect of less than 1%, keeping in mind that young men in Belgrade have the most negative attitudes toward GBV). The strongest impact on both men and women was measured in Pristina (Graph 10). We see that young men and women from BiH, on average, have a smaller level of negative attitudes towards GBV compared to other cities, but still above 71%. In addition, once again, young women have more negative attitudes toward GBV in all cases, compared to young men, but still, the program had an impact on their non-violent views, which was especially seen in Pristina in Phase 2.

We will now look at the graphs showing various aspects of violence in relationships, and afterward discuss the findings.

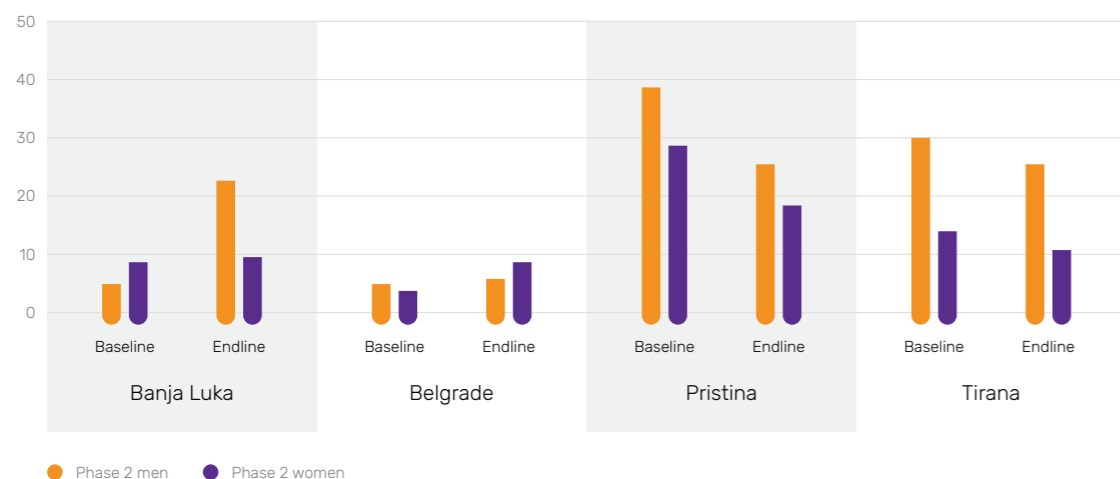
Graph 11. | Insulting or humiliating a partner (emotional violence)



Graph 12. | Hitting a partner



Graph 13. | Did you limit or forbid your partner to communicate with friends, go out, etc.?



For both phases, we present results for perpetrated emotional (insulting or humiliating a partner) and physical (hitting a partner) violence (Graphs 11 and 12). In Phase 1, we found that after the intervention, the highest level of perpetrated emotional violence in a relationship was in Sarajevo (16.5%) and Belgrade (16.3%) (Graph 11). We measured a small increase in perpetrated emotional violence in Banja Luka, Mostar, Belgrade, and Tirana. However, besides Belgrade and Mostar, we consider these effects negligible since the percentage

of perpetrated emotional violence in a relationship is low. We had similar findings for perpetrated physical violence in a relationship in Phase 1 (Graph 12).

In Phase 2 we see that both young men and young women report a higher level of perpetrated violence in a relationship compared to Phase 1. When it comes to emotional violence in a relationship (Graph 11), we measured a positive impact in all cities except in Belgrade, where we found an increase (from 10.4% to 21.5%). The strongest

positive impact was in Tirana (from 23.1% to 14.1%). For young women, as a perpetrator of emotional violence in a relationship, we observed a negative effect in Banja Luka (from 9.3% to 12.1%).

As for physical violence in a relationship, in Phase 2, we measured mostly a positive impact on young men, with the exception of Belgrade, where physical violence rose from 5.3% to 14.5%. For young women, we

measured a negative effect only in Tirana. In general, insults and humiliation were the most prevalent form of relationship violence.

In Phase 2, we found a higher level of limiting or forbidding communication in a relationship, especially in Pristina and Tirana, but the intervention had the greatest effect in these cities (Graph 13). We do not have data for Mostar and Sarajevo for this question.

Summary of gender-based violence for partners in BiH local

In other cities in BiH, data for negative attitudes towards gender-based violence were not consistent in Phase 1. The strongest positive impact was in Visoko (+36%). Perpetrated emotional and physical violence in a relationship was not assessed in other cities in BiH in Phase 1.

In Phase 2, attitudes towards gender-based violence were more negative in the endline survey in all the cities. Compared to the baseline survey, the progress was usually 5%-15%. The strongest impact was observed in Novi Travnik (22% for young men and 23% for young women). In Bijeljina, a negative impact was measured for young women (-2.7%), but there was no negative impact for young men.

Furthermore, in Phase 2, a strong positive impact of the intervention in terms of perpetrated emotional violence was measured in Bijeljina for young men (7.6%

less emotional violence), while a negative effect was seen in East Sarajevo, Jablanica, Brcko, and Tuzla. We saw a positive impact only with young women; the strongest was in Bijeljina (20% less emotional violence).

If we compare baseline and endline results from Phase 2, we see that in the majority of cases, physical violence in an intimate relationship is less present in the endline survey. For young men, we observed a strong impact in Novi Travnik (20.8% less physical violence in relationships) and Bijeljina (13.9% less physical violence in relationships), but also a slightly negative impact in Jablanica (1% more physical violence in relationships). For young women, the strongest positive impact was measured in Bijeljina (26.9% less physical violence in relationships). A negative impact was measured in Novi Travnik (8% more physical violence in a relationship).

Conclusion on gender-based violence

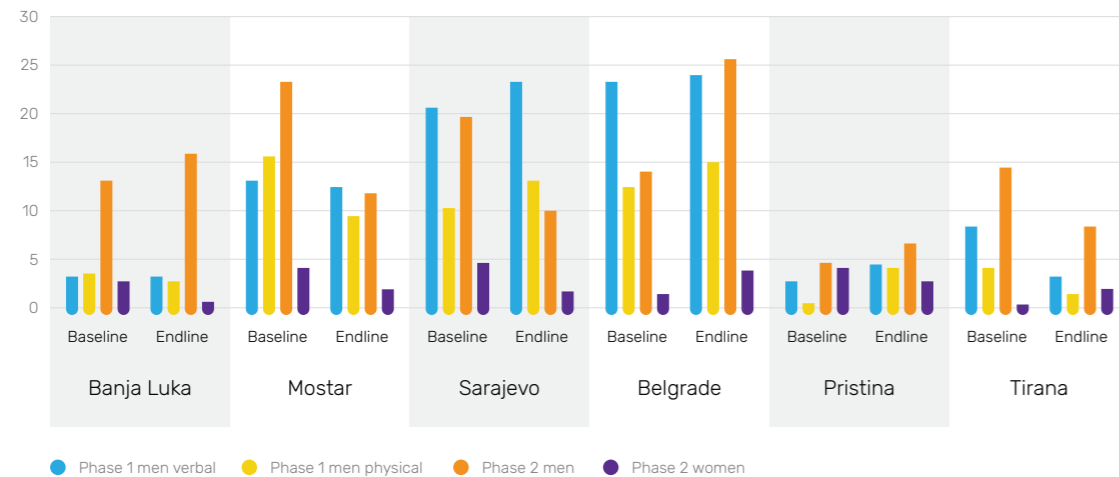
In general, we found greater levels of negative attitudes toward gender-based violence and lower levels of violence in a relationship in the endline stages of studies.

Because violent behavior in a relationship is generally low, assessing the impact of the

program is difficult. On the other hand, we can look at these results as a reinforcement of already adopted positive behaviors of young people in relationships, or more concretely, to highlight the general absence of negative behavior.

Violence against homosexuals

Graph 14. | Verbal and/or physical violence against homosexuals



In most cases, violence toward this population is present in 5% of respondents and goes up to 25%. In Phase 1, psychological and physical violence against homosexuals was as prevalent in Banja Luka, Pristina, and Tirana (Graph 14). The results are somewhat worse (compared to other cities) in Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Mostar. It should be noted that no statistically significant differences

were observed in the baseline and endline surveys. The strongest positive impact was measured in Mostar (increasing from 22.6% to 11.3%). For young women, we found a low incidence of violence against homosexuals (below 3.5%). Generally, in Phase 2, we see that young men are more prone to violence against homosexuals than young women.

Summary of violence against homosexuals for partners in BiH local

We do not have any data on violence against homosexuals for Phase 1. As for Phase 2, we measured a positive impact of the program in partner cities in BiH for both young men and women. For young men, the strongest impact was seen in Novi Travnik (from 23.1%

to 3.1% of young men that would be violent toward homosexuals). For young women, the strongest impact was seen in East Sarajevo, where violence toward homosexuals dropped from 7.5% to 0%.

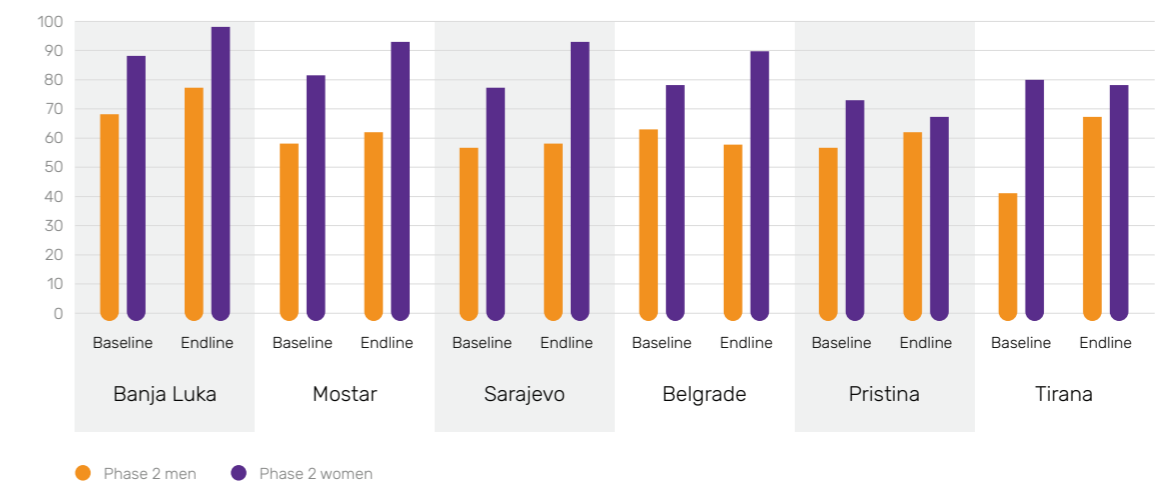
Conclusion on violence against homosexuals

We believe that the issue of violence against homosexuals is deeply rooted in homophobic attitudes, as seen in the section on homophobia. Although present, violent behavior against homosexuals is infrequent. This is probably due to the fact

that high school students had little contact with homosexuals. Given the prevalence of homophobia in society, implementing preventive programs with young people on time is recommended.

Reaction to violence

Graph 15. | Constructive reaction to a fight



We analyzed constructive reactions to a fight from the Phase 2 report (since this was not covered in the Phase 1 study). As we can see in Graph 15, more than 50% of young men and women would have constructive reactions to a fight regardless of the intervention. The strongest impact of the intervention on young men was measured in Banja Luka (from 67.2% to 77.6%) and Tirana (from 51% to 67%).

In Phase 2, young people were also asked if they felt ready to prevent violence in a relationship. In the endline study, around 71% of young men from Banja Luka and Belgrade, 74% from Tirana, and 49% from Pristina felt ready. When it comes to young

women, 66% of young women from Belgrade, 64% from Tirana, 57% from Banja Luka, and 38% from Pristina said they were prepared to react. We had a different question for Mostar and Sarajevo, hence the different results. The majority of young men and women stated that they did not experience violence in a relationship so they never had the opportunity to react. Only a few admitted they were victims. When we compare the two phases of the research, we can see that participants in the endline research said they felt more willing and empowered. It is possible that the prevention program empowered them and taught them how to behave in violent relationships.

Moreover, when it comes to violence in a relationship, the positive thing is that the number of participants who had such experiences in the endline research was

Summary of the reaction to violence for partners in BiH local

In other cities in BiH, in the Phase 2 endline survey, between 52% and 80% of young men and between 61% and 90% of young women said they would attempt to break up a fight or call for help. Lower percentages were observed among young men in Bijeljina and East Sarajevo. Young women are thus somewhat more motivated to stop violence

Results from focus groups and interviews on the impact of the program on violence prevention

Participants of the focus groups and interviews described how the program impacted the attitude of youth toward violence. The following types of influence were mostly mentioned:

- Reduced number of violent behavior cases in schools;
- Ability to recognize different types of violence, especially psychological violence;
- Greater resilience and assertiveness of youth not to engage in violence;

lower than in the baseline research. In both phases of the research, a considerably higher percentage of those who had such negative experiences successfully solved the problem.

than young men. The remaining percentage of young men would help a person they personally knew if they were in need. The progress goes up to 15%. In the endline survey, respondents stated they felt more ready and empowered to prevent violence. This percentage was on average 5-15%.

- Youth are empowered and thus more proactive in preventing violence;
- Youth who were involved in violence became aware of the causes and needs for violence;
- Greater capacity among youth to understand the position of the other side involved in the conflict and have empathy;
- The Program participants largely became aware of the consequences of violence;

Young women are empowered and educated on how to resist gender-based violence. These forms of impact are illustrated by numerous statements by participants from different regions:



I think that the change was primarily behavioral. Before, our school was notorious for its violence. Now, that has significantly changed. Sure, there are changes at the cognitive level as well, but they are often unconscious. A specific 'ethos' and atmosphere regarding the relationship toward violence was created in the school. The school's commitment to this problem, belief in the idea, and the fact that the school director, pedagogue, and others were involved, were all important. This helped the participants open up and allowed them to express their values. The impact of the Program is seen in the findings from visits to other schools and comparison with them. In other schools, any discussion on violence is more difficult.

(F, school representative, Serbia)

The Program definitely affected school violence. We had a lot of troublesome students who changed after only a few workshops and socializing and are now role models to others. The Program encouraged us to think about life. The workshops were food for the brain.

(M, program participant, Croatia)

The Program had the greatest effect on violence. In our school, problems were solved with violence. Because of that, we sometimes skipped school. During the Program, violence was reduced.

(M, program participant, Kosovo*)

The greatest impact was on violence. I was not violent, but it helped me recognize the various types of violence. I learned how to react, i.e. that it is not alright to silently observe violence. It IS my business. I should intervene and stop it. Thanks to the Program, I now have a much wider range of possible interventions.

(M, program participant, BiH – Banja Luka)

Youth are better at recognizing psychological violence. Thanks to the assertive techniques they learned, they decide not to participate in violence. The impact was greater on verbal and psychological violence than on physical.

(F, CARE staff)





Students learned how to recognize types of violence and increase resources in order to react and protect themselves and others, instead of being passive observers.

(F, School representative, BiH)

We impacted how student observers behave in conflict situations. They are now more aware of their influence. They are not passive observers; they are more active and open.

(F, School representative, Croatia)

Before, youth did not understand the consequences of their violent behavior. Through the Program, they started to understand what it's like to be in someone else's shoes and how others feel. Having said this, the workshop 'Labeling' was particularly useful.

(M, program participant, Serbia)



Conclusion on violence prevention

In conclusion, the program had a positive impact on changing attitudes toward violence and decreasing violent behavior toward peers, particularly with regard to physical violence. The program also had a positive effect on reducing negative attitudes toward gender-based violence and promoting positive behaviors in relationships. However, there is still work to be done in addressing the perception of verbal and

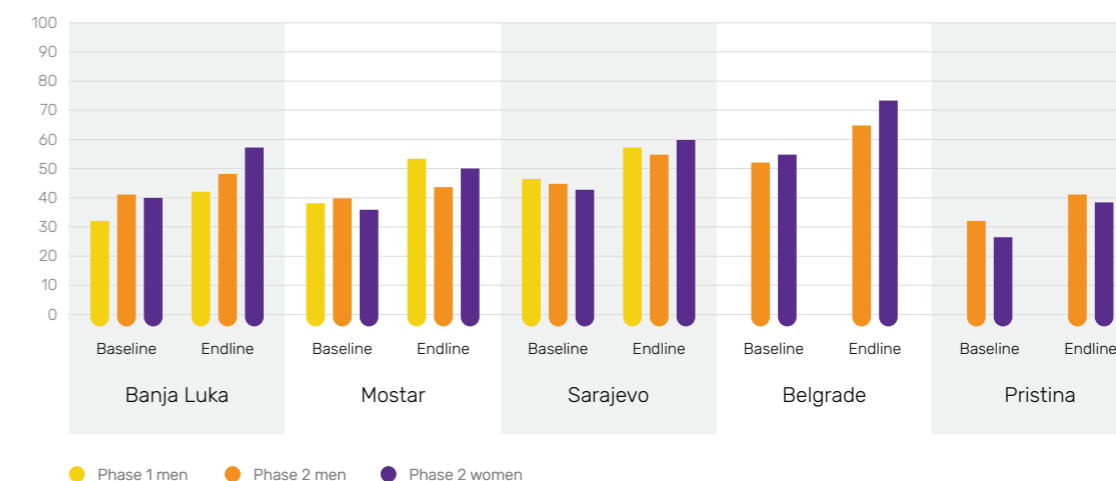
psychological violence as real violence, and in combating homophobia and violence against homosexuals. The program also resulted in greater awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of violence, increased empathy, and a greater capacity to understand the opposing side in a conflict, especially among the youth. Young women were empowered and taught how to oppose gender-based violence.



Sexual and reproductive health

We analyzed the level of knowledge concerning SRH and the use of contraception.

Graph 16. | Knowledge of SRH index

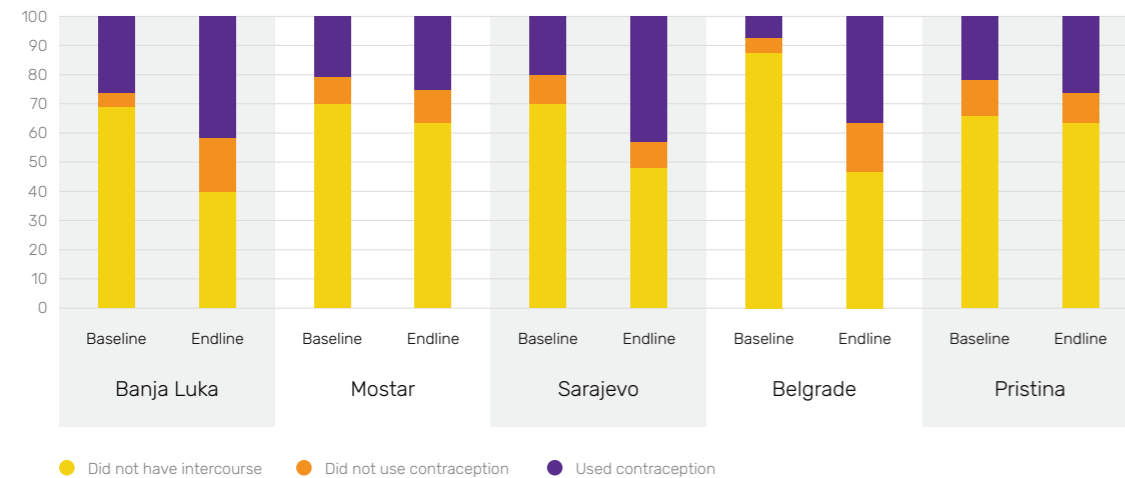


Baseline research on knowledge about sexual and reproductive health in both phases had negative findings (Graph 16). Participants, on average, had around 40% of correct answers to the questions. Still, the endline research showed significant progress in knowledge of these topics. The percentage of correct answers to statements of the questionnaire in the endline research varied between 19-90%, but in the majority of cases, the percentage of correct answers was, on average, over 50%. Participants in Belgrade showed the highest level of knowledge, while participants in Pristina had the lowest. There were no consistent differences between

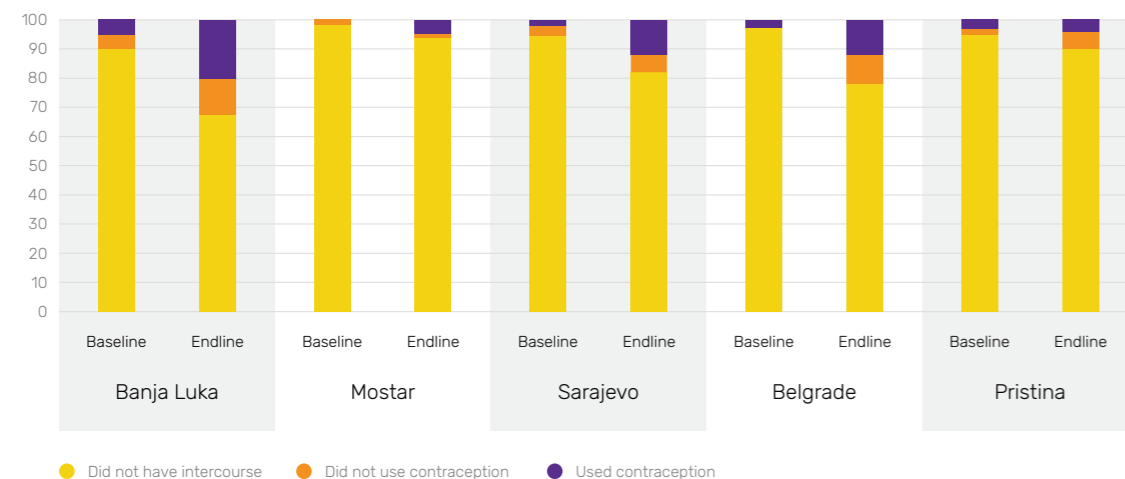
young men and young women. The questions about this topic were not included in the questionnaire in Tirana.

More detailed results indicate that participants had a lower level of knowledge of the following topics: the period when a woman is more likely to get pregnant; HIV and how it is transmitted; manifestations of sexually transmitted infections; awareness that interrupted intercourse is not a reliable method of preventing pregnancy, etc. These topics should be covered more thoroughly in future educational activities.

Graph 17. | Contraception in practice (young men)



Graph 18. | Contraception in practice (young women)



The vast majority of young men (44–87%) and young women (67–90%) stated they did not have intercourse (Graphs 17 and 18). Among those who had intercourse, a greater percentage used contraceptives (25%–35% of young men; 2%–11% of young women). Therefore, the majority of young men do use contraceptives; however, the percentages of young women who used and who did not use contraceptives were similar. We also noticed that young people from Banja Luka and Belgrade who had intercourse were more prone not to use contraception compared to

other cities. In Mostar, twice as many young men used contraception compared to those who did not in both baseline and endline research. In Sarajevo, there was an increase in the use of contraceptives for young men by almost 23%, while the number of those who did not use them was almost the same. However, findings indicate a positive impact of the intervention on the use of contraception (up to 30% for young men from Belgrade, and up to 15% for young women in Banja Luka), which is a promising result.

Summary on SRH for partners in BiH local

In other cities in BiH, Phase 1 results show that in the period of the endline research, both young women and young men improved their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health in Bijeljina, Jablanica, Knezevo, Visoko, and Vlasenica. Endline research results for young women in Novi Travnik indicated a higher level of knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, while young men showed a higher knowledge of sexually transmitted infections. In Gradiska, knowledge of sexual and reproductive health was similar in both phases of the research. The highest progress was made with young men in Visoko (47% for knowledge of reproductive health, 30% for knowledge of sexually transmitted infections, and 35% for knowledge of contraceptives).

In Phase 2, the index of knowledge of reproductive health in the endline survey

in all cities varied from 31% to 67%. In all the cities, statistically significant progress was made compared to the baseline survey. The progress, in comparison to the baseline survey, was 4%–24%.

The index of knowledge about STI in all of the cities in the endline survey was much better than in the baseline survey (by 2%–31%). The index varied from 20% to 60% (the lowest in Novi Travnik and the highest in East Sarajevo).

The index of knowledge about contraception in the endline survey, in all cities except for Novi Travnik (12%), varied from 47% to 70%. In all cities, statistically significant progress (2%–21%) was made compared to the baseline survey. The highest progress was achieved with young men in East Sarajevo (21%).

Results from focus groups and interviews on the impact of the program on sexual and reproductive health

Sexual and reproductive health is either neglected or taboo in the majority of schools, so there is much room for impact and improvement. The majority of participants underlined that there was a change in terms of greater knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, contraceptives, sexually transmissible infections, etc. Interview participants underlined the importance of the following impacts of the program:

- Students talked more openly about sexuality, contraceptives, and health in general;
- Students may have had the chance for the first time to acquire true information coming from experts, rather than half-true information;
- Extra-curricular activity “Healthy Lifestyles” was introduced in some schools;
- Students use psychological counseling services that also provide information on sexual and reproductive health more often;
- Teachers went through certain training so they can continue providing education in the future.

When it comes to this topic, participants pointed out the following:



Of course it made an impact. Numerous students weren't aware of a single sexually transmissible infection and now they are. Condoms are not the only form of contraception. They did not know anything about prevention, potential consequences, etc. This is where BMC had an impact. These topics were no longer taboo; they started openly talking about them. This is important as these subjects are not part of formal education. This is something that was supposed to be discussed even earlier as youth become sexually active earlier.

(M, program participant, BiH - Banja Luka)

This was one of the most significant lessons. They learned about contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and the problems they cause. They learned something about HIV and AIDS. Before, they knew nothing about this.

(M, school representative, Kosovo*)

The greatest change was probably in this field, especially as this is something we don't talk about in school. This is usually a taboo in society. Through the Program, they were able to learn and talk about their experiences.

(F, CARE staff)

It had an impact on dispelling myths and half-true information. Knowledge was based on hearsay. We received verified and useful knowledge through the Program.

(M, program participant, Croatia)



Conclusion on sexual and reproductive health

In conclusion, the research findings show that there was a significant improvement in the knowledge of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and the use of contraception among youth after the intervention. Although the baseline research revealed poor knowledge of SRH, the endline research showed that progress was made,

with participants in Belgrade showing the highest level of knowledge and those in Pristina the lowest. However, the research also indicated that certain topics, such as HIV, manifestations of sexually transmitted infections, and reliable methods of contraception, need to be more thoroughly covered in future educational activities. The

positive impact of the intervention on the use of contraception is a promising result, especially for young men in Belgrade and young women in Banja Luka.

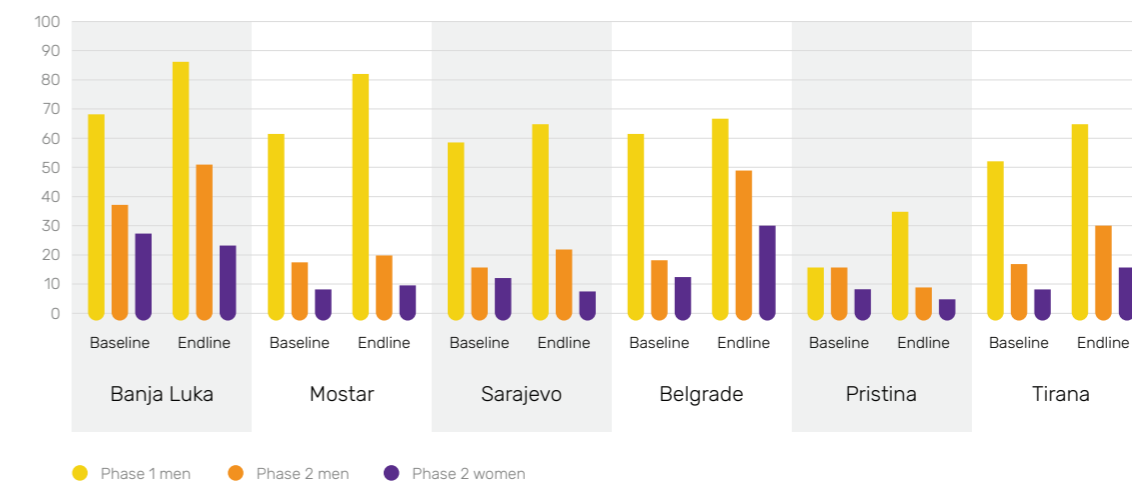
Finally, the program made a significant impact on students' attitudes toward sexuality and reproductive health, including increased openness to talk about the topic as well as the introduction of extra-curricular activities and psychological

counseling services. The training for teachers also ensured that education on sexual and reproductive health will continue in the future. These findings highlight the need for more comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education for young people, particularly in areas where knowledge is still lacking.



Alcohol and drug abuse

Graph 19. | Drinking alcohol (several times a month or more)



Both in Phase 1 and Phase 2, we found a rise in alcohol and marijuana consumption in the majority of cities, but there were some notable differences. For example, in the Phase 1 endline survey, 85.4% of young men from Banja Luka reported drinking alcohol once a month or more often (Graph 21). In the Phase 2 endline survey, 48.5% of young men stated they drank alcohol several times a month or more. Looking at Belgrade in Phase 1, we found an increase of 5.6% in

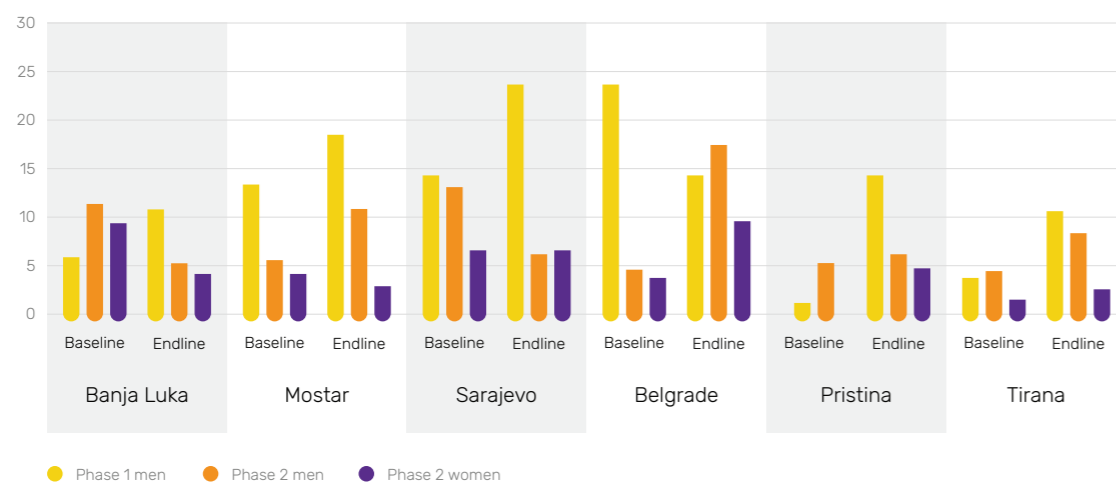
alcohol consumption in the endline survey, which was the least significant increase in alcohol consumption compared to other cities; still, more than 60% of young men consumed alcohol. For comparison, in Phase 2 in Belgrade, we found a 30.1% increase in alcohol consumption for young men, which looks dramatic, but only 49% of young men reported drinking alcohol, which is lower than the Phase 1 endline report. On the other hand, in Pristina in Phase 1, we found an

increase in alcohol consumption (from 15.9% to 34.2%) among young men, but in Phase 2 we found a decrease (from 16% to 9.5%).

This could be attributed to the overall impact of the interventions in Pristina, but also to subtle differences in the sample, public affairs, and socially acceptable ways of responding to statements in the survey. In conclusion, it was observed that the negative trend in most cities is robust, despite numerous prevention programs, and

seen as a regular side effect of young people growing up in the Balkans. What contributes to this trend is society's indifference or even benevolent attitude toward male alcohol consumption, keeping in mind the effects of socialization and religious and cultural differences between young men from these areas. Namely, in the majority of research, we noticed that alcohol consumption is lower in places where Muslims are more prevalent. Islam is more negative toward alcohol consumption than some other religions.

Graph 20. | Smoking marihuana (in the last three months)



We can find similar trends for smoking marihuana but in a lower percentage. Differences are observed in Banja Luka, where there was a decrease in marihuana consumption in Phase 2 (from 8.1% to 3%), unlike Phase 1 where there was an increase (from 6% to 11.1%). In Mostar, there was an increase in both phases for young men, but also a small decrease for young women. In Sarajevo, there was an increase in Phase 1 but also a decrease in Phase 2 (6%). In

Belgrade, there was a decrease in Phase 1 but also an increase in Phase 2 (13%). In Pristina, the rise in Phase 1 was from 1% to 13.8%, while in Phase 2 it was more or less the same, around 5-6%. In Tirana, there was an increase in both phases for both genders.

This trend of increasing marihuana usage could be explained by the fact that youth are growing up and getting more mature and engaged in this sort of behavior.

Summary of alcohol and drug abuse for partners in BIH local

In other cities in BIH, consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana was higher or the same in all cities in the endline research in both phases.

There were two exceptions in Phase 1. In Novi Travnik, the use of alcohol and cigarettes

among young women declined, while marihuana smoking remained at zero. There was also a decrease in young men drinking alcohol in Visoko (-11%). In Phase 2, there was a decrease in young men smoking cigarettes in East Sarajevo (-5%).

Results from focus groups and interviews on the impact of the program on the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse

Despite the not particularly comforting findings from the quantitative research, the interview and focus group participants felt that the program had a positive effect on the prevention of alcohol, drugs, and other psychoactive substance abuse. The problem is that during high school, youth start experimenting with psychoactive substances as they grow up, especially alcohol. The majority of participants stated that there was more and more youth in their communities who used alcohol and various synthetic drugs. The use of alcohol in some areas is part of mentality and culture, and a symbol of maturity. It is difficult to prevent those trends with any program. For that reason, the majority of participants agreed that the program should be focused on the responsible use of alcohol and emphasize the consequences of drinking. Total prohibition often leads to a counter-effect. The impact of the program on more responsible behavior when it comes to the use of psychoactive

substances can be summed in the following messages:

- If some substances are already used, then they SHOULD NOT be used to the extent that causes serious harm to health;
- One should stay aware of the harmful consequences of psychoactive substances;
- It is important to empower personal attitudes and in that way built resilience against harmful influences;
- Working on emotions is important so that people understand why they are destroying themselves by using psychoactive substances;
- Through the program, youth with addiction tendencies learned where they can seek help.



I have been working in the school for 22 years and we can really see a difference, as the Program was implemented in our school for several years. There are not as many problems; youth are more aware and responsible. A lot of it depends on the teacher's approach.

(F, school representative, BiH- Sarajevo)

We stopped them from getting drunk; now if they do drink, they do it more responsibly. We reduced the use of narcotics.

(F, CARE staff)

"There is an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs. Marijuana is the substance most used, though synthetic drugs are also often used. It may be necessary to work on prevention even with younger students. It is advisable to apply the 'responsible breaking the boundaries' strategy. A harsh approach results in revolt."

(F, (ex) Ministry representative, Serbia)

Alcohol is part of our culture. It is hard to influence youth. Alcohol goes with masculinity. It was harder to influence the use of alcohol than drugs that are generally unpopular. Alcohol is almost inevitable, which is why I spoke more about harmful consequences in the workshop.

(M, program participant, Serbia)

It is difficult to have an effect on this as it is part of our mentality. 'It's a shame not to have a drink'. Impact can be made by empowering personal attitudes and resilience against influences coming from others. These lessons are lacking in formal education, such as learning about the consequences.

(M, program participant, BiH – Banja Luka)

The program did not forbid but it pointed out the consequences. That is what will happen if you do something. Two young men used narcotics, but stopped doing it during the Program.

(M, program participant, Croatia)



Summary of alcohol and drug abuse

In conclusion, the research findings indicate a concerning trend of increasing alcohol and marijuana consumption among young people in the Balkan region. Despite the implementation of prevention programs, the rise in substance use is considered a regular side effect of growing up among young people in the area. The factors contributing to this trend include socialization, cultural differences, and the acceptance of alcohol consumption as part of the region's culture. While the quantitative results showed a

mixed trend of increasing and decreasing substance use across different cities, the qualitative findings suggest that prevention programs have positively impacted the awareness of the harmful consequences of substance abuse. Participants emphasized the importance of the responsible use of substances and building personal resilience against harmful influences. However, more efforts are needed to address the cultural and societal factors that contribute to substance abuse among youth in the region.

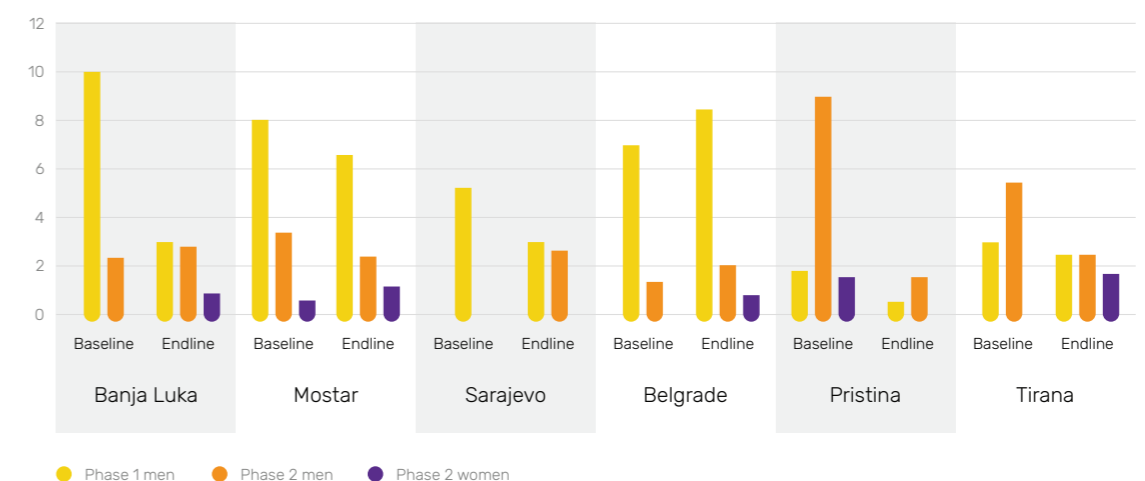


Sexual violence prevention

Sexual violence was investigated in both phases by asking the question: "Did you have sex with a girlfriend/boyfriend against her/his will?" In Phase 2, we added the

statements "I sexually harassed or touched other people against their will" and "If a woman is sexually harassed, it is usually because of the way she is dressed."

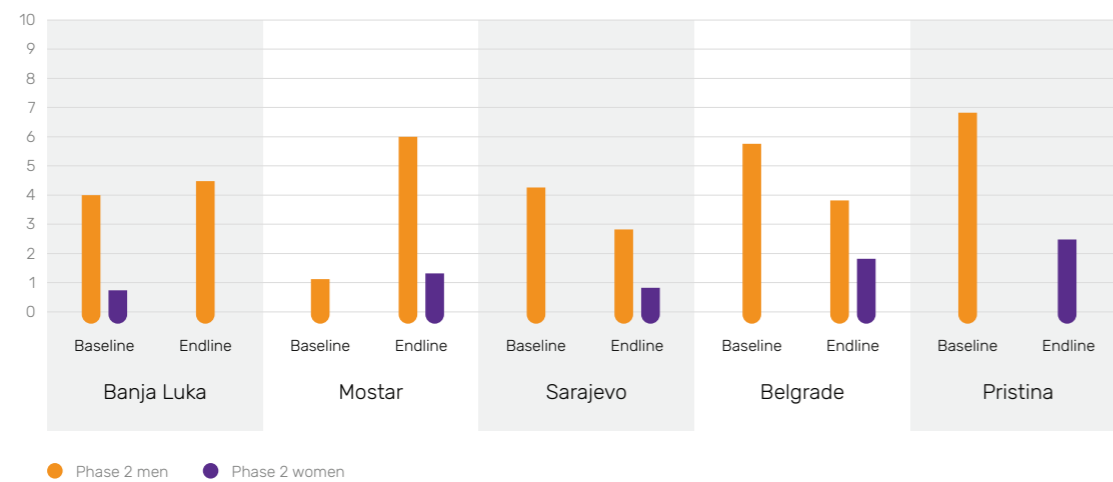
Graph 21. | Sex with partner against their will



Sexual violence, according to the Phase 1 endline survey, is most prevalent in Belgrade (among 8.5% of young men in the endline survey). In other cities, it is present with 3% of respondents on average. There is no significant difference in the baseline and endline surveys, except for Banja Luka. In this city, sexual violence decreased from 10.1% to 3.2%, which is a statistically significant difference.

In Phase 2, sexual violence in a relationship (sex with a partner against his/her will) was less prevalent and varies to up to 4%. If we compare the results in the baseline and endline research, we can see that they are different from one city to the next. In the endline study, the situation in Banja Luka and Belgrade was worse, especially with young men, whereas in Pristina and Tirana, progress and lower level of sexual violence in a relationship were observed. That progress in Pristina and Tirana varied by up to 7%.

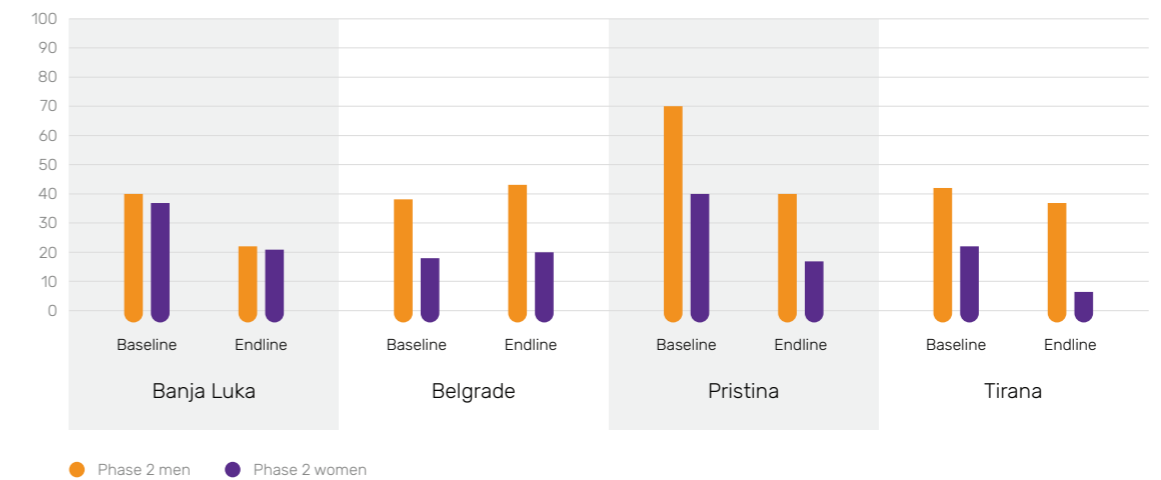
Graph 22. | "I sexually harassed or touched other people against their will."



In Phase 2 endline results, perpetrated sexual harassment was confirmed by around 3.5% of young men and around 1.2% of young women (Graph 22). In Tirana, this question was not included in the questionnaire. As for young women in Mostar, Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Pristina, we see an increase in perpetrated

sexual harassment, the highest being in Pristina (2.4%). Increased perpetrated sexual harassment by young men was observed in Banja Luka and Mostar. The strongest positive impact on young men was observed in Pristina (from 6.8% to 0%).

Graph 23. | "If a woman is sexually harassed, it is usually because of the way she is dressed."



In the end, we examine attitudes toward sexual harassment. In Phase 2, around 40% of young men from Pristina, 24% from Banja Luka, 36% from Tirana, and 44% from Belgrade felt that if a woman is sexually harassed, it is usually because of the way she is dressed (Graph 23). What is also worrying is the fact that a significant percentage of young women felt that the way young

women dress is a cause of sexual violence (8-22%). If we compare baseline and endline surveys, we can see that in Banja Luka, Pristina, and Tirana, fewer young men and women believe that the way young women dress is a cause for sexual violence. This difference is not statistically significant but suggests some improvement in terms of the attitudes of young people.*

Summary of sexual violence for partners in BIH local

In other cities in BIH in Phase 2, sexual violence in a relationship was mostly on a similar level in both phases of the survey and varied from 0% to 10%. Sexual harassment was lower or the same for all cities except

Novi Travnik, where a decline for young men (10%) was observed. The prevalence of sexual harassment was 0% to 3% in the endline research.

Results from focus groups and interviews on the impact of the program on the prevention of sexual violence

In general, sexual violence was not assessed separately but within the scope of violence in general, so we have less concrete and targeted data on the impact of the Program in this regard. Program participants are more sensitive about the meaning and types of violence, so they are more informed about

the types of sexual violence. Additionally, reporting has shown that they tried to prevent some forms of sexual harassment in school. The impression is that more attention should be given to education on "sexting" in the future.



There used to be a lot of sexual harassment. This was a serious issue when I was a school director. It decreased during the program.

(M, school representative, Kosovo*)

The first time we spoke about sexual and reproductive health was in a BMC meeting. Some people did not know what sexual harassment is so they got to learn more about it during the program.

(M, school representative, Kosovo*)

I started recognizing sexual violence, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching in clubs, and how to react and efficiently get out of those situations.

(F, program participant, BiH - Sarajevo)

That is a taboo topic. They have no one to go to; nor have they received information from friends. They learn about it through workshops. They also learn about risks. This is something we should talk about more, as the social environment sends a completely different message.

(F, school representative, BiH)

The participants understood that at any given moment they have the right to change their minds. If they didn't learn it here, it's unlikely they would ever hear about it anywhere else as that is something nobody talks about.

(M, program participant, Serbia)



Conclusion on the prevention of sexual violence

We measured a low level of sexual violence overall. As a result, we did not find a significant impact of the intervention; however, there were some promising findings in terms of reducing sexual violence and changing attitudes toward sexual harassment. While sexual violence in a relationship remains a problem in some cities, a decrease in sexual violence has been noted in Banja Luka, particularly among young men. The program also had a positive effect on changing the attitudes toward

sexual harassment, with fewer young men and women attributing the cause of sexual violence to the way young women dress. Program participants are now more informed about types of sexual violence and are actively working to prevent some forms of sexual harassment in schools. These results suggest that the program has the potential to be an effective tool in the prevention of sexual violence, and further attention should be given to expanding education on topics such as "sexting."

The most important changes

Participants in the qualitative research summed up the greatest and most important changes resulting from the program. In all cities, changes in participants' personalities and their social skills have been listed as the most valuable result. Changes that were mentioned the most include the following: increased self-respect and self-esteem;

more freely expressing attitudes; greater openness toward others and those who are different; greater resilience to peer pressure; improved communication skills; better developed critical thinking; better dealing with their own emotions. The following quotations illustrate these changes well:



During the first event at Sava Center, a skinhead walked onto the stage. We were all scared of what he would say. He said: 'Ouch, I have stage fright.' Huge applause erupted in the room. That detail reflects the entire Program and its success. It's a great thing that youngsters got in touch with their emotions, i.e. with themselves.

(F, (ex) ministry representative, Serbia)

During and after the program, children started to express their views more freely; they explored more, cooperated with each other, and their way of thinking changed. They perceived peer pressure differently. They were more supportive of each other.

(F, school representative, BiH - Bosnian-Podrinje Canton)





Through the program, they joined a new group and gained new friends. In the Be a Man Club, they could hang out, study together. They avoided conflict situations as they had a group behind them that supported their refusal to participate in the violence.

(M, CSO, BiH – Sarajevo)



When it comes to impacting attitudes and behavior, we can conclude that the participants noted that the most positive

changes occurred in the field of gender-equitable relations and violence, but they mentioned some other fields as well.



The most interesting topic was the prevention of violence. We had many different types of violence in school. During and after the Program, 80% of youth said they noted a decrease in violence, especially psychological violence and bullying. Alcohol and drug abuse, as well as sexual harassment, declined as well.

(M, school representative, Kosovo*)

The program contributed to a better understanding of gender roles and greater tolerance. That was a valuable thing that tipped the scale over and fastened the maturing process, contributed to them being themselves, being different, and resisting outside impacts.

(F, school representative, Serbia)



In addition to the above-mentioned, interview participants pointed out the importance of interactive work, the involvement of peer

educators and teachers, and the fact that the program lasts for several years and involves all pupils, instead of only a few selected ones.

Most effective program components

In practice, Program Y included several components such as workshops and Be a Man Clubs (BMCs), through which various campaigns and numerous other events were organized. In the text below, we will present

the results of surveys and qualitative (focus groups, interviews) research on student satisfaction with these components and what they consider to be the most useful components.

Results of survey studies

In the regional study, we only have data on the impact of components in Phase 2, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this topic was investigated in both phases of the research.

Brčko having the highest. In the majority of the cities, 20–50% of respondents noticed the promotional activities of BMC campaigns.

In Phase 2, the majority of participants from the region were satisfied with the effects of individual workshops. Approximately 30–80% of youngsters from all of the cities said they learned a lot in the workshops. Youth from Tirana, followed by youth from Banja Luka, was satisfied with the workshops the most. Participants in almost all cities highly valued the work of the trainers, communication, and socializing, as well as the methods used during the work. Around 30%–45% of participants noticed or participated in the project's campaigns. The greatest percentage of participants (35%–62%) remember the promotion of the Be a Man Club, followed by the promotion of workshops and the Are U OK campaign (30%–60%). The majority of participants highly valued and showed satisfaction with the project as a whole.

In Phase 1, around 89–98% of young men had heard about the BMC, and 56%–79% had participated in one of the school-day activities. A significant percentage (45%–84%) had been exposed to some of the activities organized during the campaign. A slightly stronger impact has been made on those that participated in the BMC.

In Phase 1 (in BiH), correlations between the levels of involvement in project activities and the attitudes and behaviors of young men were measured. In Banja Luka, there was a significant correlation between exposure to the campaign and higher SRH knowledge. In Mostar, there was a correlation between higher exposure to the campaign and gender equality, higher SRH knowledge, and lower peer violence. In Sarajevo, the exposure to the campaign was connected with lower levels of alcohol consumption. In Mostar and Sarajevo, involvement in workshops was linked with lower levels of violence toward young women and greater SRH knowledge. In Sarajevo, a correlation between lower violence toward women and higher SRH was also noted.

In other BiH cities, between 15% and 64% of youngsters from all of the cities (40% on average) said they learned a lot in the workshops. Different percentages of respondents have joined the Be a Man Club in various cities, ranging from 3%–37%, with Bijeljina having the lowest percentage and

All of this quantitative data shows that all aspects of the work (participation in the work of Be a Man Clubs, campaigns, and workshops) have resulted in certain improvements in the attitudes and behaviors of young men and women in various spheres of their lives. When we look at how many positive correlations were established between project activities and various life

spheres, we can see that all three aspects of the work contributed to the accomplishment of project goals, with a slightly stronger impact made on those who participated in the Be a Man Club. This is no surprise, as all participants from the Be a Man Club took a more active approach and were more committed to most of the program activities.

Results of interviews and focus groups

Impact of the workshops

During focus groups and interviews, participants evaluated the impact of the workshops and assessed which topics were most useful. Numerous topics are mentioned: violence, gender relations, SRH, and the prevention of psychoactive abuse; however, when reflecting on the impact, participants mostly mentioned violence and

gender relations. The impact of workshops, in addition to the concrete knowledge, also contributed to their better processing of emotions, more authentic self-expression, and acceptance of others and tolerance. Similarly, interactive work encouraged better communication, relationships, and closeness among the participants.



Workshops on gender equality and stereotypes affected me the most. It affected the way I talk and joke with people. I started judging people less, without stereotypes. More so, we are now more relaxed talking about relationships between men and women and sexuality. It is now easier to talk with family members; there are not as many taboos. It really changed me. I am now managing situations better, feeling more secure, and no longer feel inferior because I am a woman.

(F, program participant, Kosovo*)

They had an impact on all of my relationships, changing how, when, and how much I express my emotions. Crying is no longer my only reaction. The workshops on violence, especially violence in relationships, had the greatest impact. They taught me how to get out of toxic and unhealthy relationships. I have become more reflective and better able to process my emotions and thoughts.

(F, program participant, BiH – Mostar)



Gender and sex were the most interesting topics to me. I changed my attitude and relationship toward life. I became more open. I come from a conservative family. This program made me more open. Likewise, I learned about the importance of contraception and SRH.

(F, program participant, BiH – Sarajevo)

In the workshops, I learned what it's like to be in somebody else's shoes. In addition, the workshops impacted my understanding of the role of men and women. Young men started doing 'women' tasks and finding that okay.

(F, program participant, Albania)



Impact of the campaigns

The campaigns mostly marked different holidays, such as March 8 (International Women's Day), Mental Health Day, Human Rights Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence, etc. During the interviews, youth from various regions pointed out the importance of different campaigns. For example, in BiH they underlined the importance of Orange Day, campaigns on the prevention of violence, prevention of smoking, etc.; in Albania, it was the Watch out! Sex campaign; in Croatia, Dislike to Hate; in Kosovo*, Are U OK, as well as promotional activities on sexual-reproductive health, etc.

The participants stressed that the campaigns resulted in benefits on both a personal

and a wider community level. Primarily, they informed the wider community of the importance of the topics covered. Likewise, individuals benefited from the campaigns that allowed them to:

- gain new friends and acquaintances;
- develop social skills;
- develop communication skills;
- gain greater self-esteem;
- better understand their emotions;
- learn something new about the campaign topics.

All of the above mentioned is reflected in the participants' statements:

The campaigns developed my social skills. That allowed me to overcome introversion. I especially remember campaigns on SRH. I'm now more connected with my emotions. For example, I can confide in my mother, which was not the case before.

(M, program participant, Kosovo*)

I remember the Are U OK campaign, the forum theatre marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence. The campaign on mental health attracted many people. The campaigns impacted our emotional relationships, making us question who we are and how we feel now. It was easier to confide in one person, which is not our mentality.

(M, program participant, YMI, Kosovo*)

I remember the Dislike to Hate campaign. It addressed national relations. We developed a slogan and published it online. I loved field trips and visits to the nearby excursion site Sljeme. We once went to a football game in pink T-shirts. Those things were great as they involved socializing as well.

(M, program participant, Croatia)

Impact of the BMC

Several focus group participants assessed their experience with the BMC as positive and important for their further work and development. BMCs contributed to:

- development of social, leadership, and communication skills;
- better understanding of oneself;
- expression of one's personality before other people more freely;
- questioning stereotype attitudes and behaviors;
- improved self-esteem;
- increased sense of security and acceptance;
- greater openness and trust towards others and different things; etc.

In sum, the participants stressed that BMCs helped them in becoming more mature, healthy, open, and pro-social individuals. This is confirmed by a number of quotations.

The BMC changed our mindset. We were one person before that experience and completely different afterward. I was like a robot before. Brave, strong, and full of stereotypes. I'm different now and I don't want others to grow up like me.

(M, program participant, Kosovo*)

The BMC impacted my formation as a person. It affected my verbal communication, way of organizing myself in general, and getting by at the faculty. It is now much easier for me to be organized in any situation. That was one of the better decisions of my life. The impact is also visible when we look at the youth from the BMC, and how serious and committed they are when planning some activity. When you look at some other youth who were not part of the BMC, their work is much less organized.

(M, program participant, BiH – Banja Luka)

The BMC changed my life quite a bit. It impacted my self-esteem. I was shy, but it helped me to open up. Various topics were no longer taboo. I do not make judgments on the spot. It had an impact on views on violence the most. I learned to set boundaries for other people.

(F, program participant, BiH – Mostar)

The BMC makes youth feel valuable, as if they belong, as if they are noticed in a positive way. In a group, they have an effect on one other. In controversial situations, members of the BMC ask themselves: What would the reaction be in the BMC if I did that?

(M, program participant, BiH – Banja Luka)

The BMC made the greatest impact, we cried in some sessions, spoke about personal things, we could be vulnerable. It was like therapy...We learned to be what and who we are.

(F, program participant, Albania)

Conclusion on methods that work best (based on quantitative research, interviews, and focus groups)

Based on the quantitative survey results and qualitative research from focus groups and interviews, it is clear that all three components of Program Y (workshops, campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs) contributed to the success of the program. The workshops were highly valued and effective in increasing knowledge and changing attitudes, with up to 80% of participants reporting that they learned a lot during the workshops. The campaigns were successful in increasing awareness of the program and its goals, with the promotion of Be a Man Clubs being the most memorable campaign for the majority of participants. Finally, the Be a Man Clubs were the most impactful in terms of behavioral changes, with participants reporting deeper connections with their peers, increased sense of security, and establishment of long-term friendships.

The data also shows that the program had a positive impact on various spheres of young people's lives, including sexual and reproductive health knowledge, gender equality, and the reduction of peer violence. Participation in the Be a Man clubs was linked

to the strongest impact on these positive changes.

The qualitative research further reinforces the importance of combining all three components of the program. The workshops were important in building knowledge, but the campaigns and Be a Man Clubs were necessary to create a supportive community that encourages and reinforces positive changes in attitudes and behaviors.

In conclusion, the success of Program Y can be attributed to the combination of workshops, campaigns, and Be a Man Clubs. Each component contributed in its unique way to the overall impact of the program, with Be a Man Clubs having the strongest impact on behavioral changes. The program's success demonstrates the importance of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to prevention programs targeting young people.

The conclusion on the importance of all three components is illustrated by statements of participants:



It is important to combine all activities. Everything is linked. None of the activities would make an impact if only one was carried out. Unity is important.

(M, program participant, BiH – Banja Luka)

Workshops, campaigns, and BMCs are the three key pillars of the fortress. They are inseparable.

(F, program participant, Albania)



Conclus- ions

Conclusions



CONCLUSIONS

In all of the cities, results of the endline research showed an increased level of participation of young men and young women in various daily house chores (cooking, washing, cleaning, etc.), and these levels are higher in Phase 2, indicating a positive trend in participation in household activities from 2014 to 2020.

Research findings show that the most progress in all of the cities was made in the area of attitudes toward gender relations. Despite this, attitudes toward gender equality, including homophobia and violence, are still riddled with stereotypes. This is, perhaps, best demonstrated by the fact that between 30% and 40% of young men still think it is not okay for men to cry and show emotions in front of others, which addresses the question of the emotional component of gender attitudes. Since there is a positive trend from 2014 to 2020 concerning gender relations, we can conclude that work with youth in this regard should continue.

A positive thing is that in the majority of cases, the perception of violence and forms of violence in the endline research was more mature and deeper than in the baseline. Besides that, in most cities, physical and gender-based violence was less expressed in the endline research than at the beginning of the program. In the endline research, the majority of young men and young women felt capable and more ready and empowered to prevent possible violent behavior in an intimate relationship.

In the baseline phase, young women's and young men's knowledge about sexual and reproductive health was average in all the cities, but with significantly better results in the endline phase. This data is useful as it shows that preventive programs can have a considerable impact on the lifestyles of youth, which is why they must be continued since the level of knowledge needs to be higher.

Endline results show that the percentage of youth consuming alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana has increased in all the cities. With age, youth are more exposed to new challenges and risky behaviors. The future implementation of Program Y will attempt to find additional ways to prevent these negative trends as much as possible.

We can conclude that several positive things were identified in the endline research. Gender equality views have improved, as has youth participation in household activities, violence, and gender-based violence have decreased, and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health has improved. All of these positive trends were also confirmed in interviews and focus groups.

We have not found progress or consistent change in the field of psychoactive substance abuse and mental health.

Influence on knowledge/ attitudes/skills/behaviors?

The main positive effect of the program regarding the *level of knowledge* was seen in the area of SRH, since this level was directly measured. Indirectly, we can see that effect in terms of gender attitudes and recognizing types of violence.

The positive impact of the program on the *level of skills* was mainly seen in household activities, but also in the prevention of violence. Positive impact in the prevention of (relationship) violence also addresses the level of confidence (readiness to stop violence).

The positive effect on attitudes was mainly seen in gender attitudes, as well as attitudes towards different forms of violence.

Positive effects on young people's behavior can be seen in almost all key areas: higher participation in household activities; less perpetrated violent behavior toward peers, partners, and homosexuals; increased responsibility concerning contraception; and greater readiness to prevent violence. We saw a negative trend in the area of alcohol and drug abuse, but without control groups, we cannot conclude if the program slowed down the trend of higher consumption of alcohol and drugs.

It is easier to make a change on the level of behavior, but it takes time and persistence to internalize behaviors, hence advocacy should continue to make Program Y continuous and supported by institutions; only with continuity can we aim towards a deeper change within young people, and thus, more sustainable change.

We already mentioned that positive role models and the overall approach of the project's staff toward young people had an important effect, but we must not forget that this approach was accompanied and supported by a series of other activities, such as campaigning. The reason why young people cite the approach and socialization as the most important component is that it is the most important to them. However, without campaigning and supporting activities, the impact could be scattered. This way, they have awareness of being a part of something big, and that alone can make a major contribution to the overall impact of the program.

This program has demonstrated that different aspects of working with youth (Be a Man Clubs, campaigns, workshops) can contribute to the improvement of lifestyles of both young men and women, with the greatest impact made on those who had participated in several of the program components.

The concept of work in this program gives good results and should be supported in the future and further developed. Additionally, it is necessary to obtain systematic support from institutions to establish mechanisms so that youngsters know who to address when they face problems or have other needs. We expect that the program will inspire responsible education institutions and schools to work more actively on establishing sustainable mechanisms, i.e. regular curriculum, that would lead to the improvement of lifestyles of youth.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In all cities, changes in participants' *personalities and their social skills* have been listed as the most valuable result. Changes that are mentioned the most are the following: greater self-respect and self-esteem; expressing attitudes more freely; openness towards others and those that are different; greater resilience to peer pressure; communication skills improved; critical thinking more developed; better dealing with their own emotions.
- The program impacted the *attitudes, knowledge, and behavior* of youth in different ways. In the area of gender relations, it helped in developing a different attitude and a more sensible perception of gender and sex, as well as eliminating certain prejudice, which in turn led to more tolerant gender relationships and behaviors. In the area of violence, the Program contributed to a better understanding of types of violence, as well as to the reduction of violent forms of behavior. Concerning the use of psychoactive substances, the program led to a more responsible approach to the use of substances and better awareness of harmful consequences. In the sphere of sexual and reproductive health and prevention of sexual violence, the Program primarily had an impact on better awareness and knowledge of these phenomena.
- When we compare the *importance of individual methods*, the conclusion is that the most important thing is the *combination* of workshops, campaigns, and participation in BMCs. Participants evaluated the impact of the workshops and assessed which topics were the most useful. A number of topics are mentioned, such as violence, gender relations, SRH, and the prevention of psychoactive substances, but when reflecting on the impact, participants most often mention violence and gender relations. Those changes became stronger on account of the campaigns and BMC. The campaigns mostly contributed to spreading the Program's messages in the community, while BMCs perhaps left the most profound and lasting traces. Youth stressed that within the BMC they became more mature, healthy, open, and pro-social individuals. The BMC contributed to the development of social, leadership, and communication skills; better understanding of oneself; improved self-esteem; increased sense of security and acceptance; greater openness and trust toward others and differences, etc.
- When it comes to impacting attitudes and behavior, the most positive changes occurred in the field of *violence and gender-equitable relations*. The impact of the program on gender relations was accomplished and manifested in various ways: understanding differences between gender and sex; eliminating the stereotypes on gender roles of men and women; greater participation of young men in house choirs; greater acceptance of homosexual persons; more open views of marriage, etc.
- The program impacted the attitude of youth towards *violence* in various ways: reduced number of violent behavior cases in schools; better recognition of various types of violence; greater resilience and assertiveness of youth; better understanding of causes and needs for violence; increased awareness

of consequences of violence, etc. The majority of students noted a change in terms of greater knowledge of *sexual and reproductive health*, contraceptives, sexually transmissible infections, etc. Students talked more openly about those topics and got the chance, maybe for the first time, to acquire true information coming from experts, instead of half-true information.

- Judging by the results of quantitative research, the program had the least impact on the prevention of the use of *psychoactive substances*. Alcohol use in some areas is part of mentality and culture, a symbol of maturity, making it difficult to prevent those tendencies with any program. Interview participants pointed out that the program caused them to consume alcohol more responsibly; have greater resilience to negative peer pressure; have a better understanding of the consequences of substance abuse; have a better understanding of their own emotions, etc.
- The program was not focused on *sexual violence*, which is why we have fewer data on the impact of the Program in this regard. Program participants are now more informed about types of sexual violence, which reduced sexual harassment in schools.
- The way *education is conducted* is very important and well thought out. The positive thing is that the program lasts three years, allowing for continuous and structured work. The interactive methodology was also valued positively as students were more engaged. Another

positive thing is that many students from diverse classes were involved in the program, rather than only individuals already participating in similar programs. Additionally, peer education provides additional value, even though it is useful that teachers attend and complete certain training, and then apply their new knowledge in their future work.

- The personal values and attitudes of a *teacher* are also important during the implementation of the education program. If a teacher does not support the values of the program, it will not be successful. Teachers are those who pass on the main messages, so it is to familiarize them with the Program ideas.
- In *gender-mixed groups*, interaction and discussion were quite fruitful and more intensive. This is most likely because male and female participants have different attitudes and need to prove themselves to the opposite gender.
- The impact of the program is greater in *smaller communities* because there are usually fewer activities there, thus activities like YMI attract greater interest and attention. Similar to the above-mentioned, working in *smaller* BMCs is more private and personal. There is a stronger bond between the participants in such BMCs, greater mutual social support, more sincere communication, and greater potential for inner psychological growth.
- The increase of *nationalism* in the region entails a number of consequences. It also encourages various forms of intolerance, including gender intolerance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic recommendations

- The study confirmed the importance of implementing this program with pupils in their final grades of primary school. This age group (13-15 years of age) marks the beginning of adolescence and is critical for the development of attitudes and life values in youth. In this period, new attitudes of youth toward different life spheres (violence, ethnic relations, sexuality, gender equality, etc.) are formed and it is important to direct them in the right way. Greater inclusion of parents in project activities has been reiterated in several locations. This is important for several reasons. It is difficult to expect a long-term change in the attitude of young people if their parents encourage violent behavior, gender prejudice, etc.
- Additionally, parents are seen as key allies in the introduction of the program into the school system. Parents are satisfied when positive change happens with their children, but because they are not well-informed about the program, they are sometimes skeptical of it. For that reason, it is necessary to better inform the parents and engage them in the program more actively, even though this is not easy. The decision on whether to work with a bigger or smaller number of schools should be a strategic one, as this directly relates to the intensity of work. The more schools, the more difficult it is to organize or guarantee success and quality of work.
- The study showed it is necessary to pay close attention to the process of selection of schools and partner organizations in the future. The program should be implemented only where there are conditions for the successful realization of the program. This implies that partners who lack sufficient capacities and commitment to the program can only harm the program's image.
- The reports revealed that the participative and flexible principle of work used in the program gave excellent results. The work method where youth plan their own activities is an additional motivator that fosters their commitment and identification with the project. The outcome was that in planned activities and campaigns there was three-four times more youth than originally planned. This implies that such practice should continue.
- To secure sustainability, it is important to identify the best model of program institutionalization. The same model would almost certainly not fit every region. That is why the model should be identified for each region individually. Some of the options include additional curriculum subjects; program implementation within other classes or school subjects; extracurricular activity. According to the representatives of ministries, the introduction of a new subject can overburden students, and there is the problem of teaching staff who would lead that subject, the method of grading it, etc. On the other hand, some school representatives propagate the introduction of regular school subjects because it would encourage teachers to engage more actively, prepare, and educate themselves. The success of the program heavily depends on school staff and teachers, as they serve as role models for students. Therefore, teachers would benefit from different training (e.g. SRH), as additional capacity building is usually not offered to them. Training should be offered to school

staff as well. They would benefit from training in advocacy, presentation skills (how to present certain ideas to relevant ministries), etc.

- Cohesion between a school and the local community is important. That is why schools must establish a better connection with CSOs in local communities and

encourage synergy between them. Schools need support from CSOs for a number of reasons. They can also be of assistance in educational activities. Extra work should be done on the development and affirmation of "schools of excellence," as this adds to the increased motivation of schools to participate in the Program.

Specific recommendations

Recommendations for the program

- Despite the progress, results point out that more work is needed to reduce gender stereotypes and intolerance. Namely, in the endline research, as many as 40% of young men expressed gender unequal norms and social distance toward homosexuals. Among the young women, up to 30% have stereotypical attitudes toward gender roles.
- The program dealt with numerous issues, but more attention concerning sexual and reproductive health should be paid to the following areas: periods when it is more likely to become pregnant; knowledge about HIV and how it is transmitted; manifestation of sexually transmitted infections, etc.
- The concept of peer educators must be encouraged as it carries the greatest potential.
- The topics they will discuss can remain the same, but some can be slightly adjusted (a more interesting approach to the topic of violence). Topics that empower emotional literacy should be included.
- More work is needed on the development of the school team (management, expert associates, teachers), empowering its members, and mutual bonding.
- The program is excellent during the implementation, but once finished, it loses its power in some cities due to a lack of follow-up. This is where the school team could take over and ensure the continuation of at least some aspects of the program.
- Expert leadership was lacking in some areas. It is necessary to secure quality monitoring and expert leadership during the Program implementation.
- It is critical for local partners' staff to focus solely on the program and not on other projects, as it can result in a loss of quality.
- It is necessary to dedicate more attention to the coordination of teachers and peer educators to avoid misunderstandings about the dates and timing of workshops.
- Finding ways to engage students who want to be more involved in the program is needed.
- Organizing concerts and theatre performances can be a good way to attract more people and expand the program.

Recommendations for workshops

- The results have shown that additional attention should be paid to emotional intelligence. It is recommended to organize workshops that teach youth how to pay more attention to understanding and controlling emotions. They are often the source of violent and discriminatory behavior. By increasing emotional maturity, their problems could be solved.
- The reports revealed that in some regions (e.g. Serbia) there are a number of similar preventive programs and workshop methods on, for example, violence. They apply similar work methods, which students find monotonous. It is necessary to develop different, subtler, and more interesting approaches to addressing these topics.
- Youngsters often drink under the influence of peers. Thus, it is necessary to organize workshops on the role of peer pressure and how to resist it.
- It was noticed that youth were exposed to numerous threats on the internet. In order to avoid misuse and act preventively, it would be beneficial to include workshops on violence on the internet (cyberbullying) in the program. Additionally, the workshop "Sexting" should also be included in the program.
- Gambling is one of the newer challenges for youth. It is a topic that was not previously covered in the program and has been neglected. It would make sense to include workshops on this topic.
- Organizing more education sessions for teachers in vocational schools where the program is implemented is imperative.
- Presenting content and topics during workshops through concrete and realistic examples is also imperative.

Recommendations for BMCs

- Through the future implementation of Program Y and by encouraging participation in BMCs, an attempt should be made to prevent the consumption of psychoactive substances and other risky behaviors as much as possible.
 - The work of the BMCs and the organization of campaigns in some areas has become a defined and identical routine. It is necessary to consider new kinds of promotion and creative campaigns.
 - In some cities, it has become normal for young people to consume alcohol. In those areas, it is necessary to intensify the work on the prevention of alcohol consumption. When doing so, it is necessary to follow the strategy of "responsible breaking of boundaries." A harsh approach results in revolt.
 - Youth learn the most through direct experience and from their peers. With this in mind, it would be beneficial to organize an exchange between BMC or YMI students of different generations.
- It is necessary to foster the concept of peer educators as it carries the greatest potential. Topics can remain the same, but some can be slightly adjusted (a subtler approach to the topic of violence). Topics that empower emotional literacy should also be included.
- In some regions (e.g. Serbia) there are several similar preventive programs on, for example, violence. Students find similar work methods monotonous. It is necessary to find different, subtler, and more interesting approaches to processing these topics.



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ANNEXES

Annex A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH YMI PARTICIPANTS

A. Interview Set-Up

Greeting/name; individual affiliation; purpose; informed consent.

B. Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to ask you about your perspectives on the changes which happened related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse and (5) prevention of sexual violence, as a result of direct CARE and partners' engagement. The interview should last for about 90 minutes.

The information that you tell me will remain confidential. I will never use your name in any report. If I use an exact quote from you, you will not be identified in any way. If you do not mind, I would like to tape record the interview. That way I will know that I accurately recorded what you said. Do you agree to allow me to tape record the interview?

Some of the questions I will ask are about personal feelings and private aspects of your life. You are not obligated to answer any question that you do not feel like answering. If you want to skip over a question, just tell me. If you want to stop at any time, just tell me.

Do you have any questions before we start? (Start the interview)

C. Background Information

Before we begin, I would like to get some background information.

- a. How old are you?
- b. What high school did you go to and in what period?
- c. In which period and for how long did you participate in Program Y?
- d. What activities did you take part in? Besides workshops, did you participate in additional activities (BMC, campaigns, etc.)?

D. Effects of the Program components

I wanted to ask about your involvement in the YMI program.

- a. Did you participate in the **workshops**?
- b. Which sessions or topics did you like the most? e.g. Workshop on:
 - Meaning of 'sex' and meaning of 'gender';
 - Characteristics of men and women;
 - Fights and peer violence;
 - Violence in relationships and sexual violence;
 - Ways of resolving disputes, fights or conflicts;
 - Expressing emotions and anger;
 - Use of alcohol and different types of drugs;
 - Sexual and reproductive health.
- c. According to your opinion, which workshops impacted the students the most and in what way?
- d. With all that you learned or did during these workshops, did anything change for you regarding:
 - Ideas of what it means to be a young man in this community, school, family;
 - Violence prevention;
 - Sexual and reproductive health;
 - Alcohol and drug abuse, and
 - Prevention of sexual violence relating to young women and young men.
- e. Did participation in the workshops affect any of your knowledge, skills, confidence, attitudes, behaviors? If so, in which spheres the most?
- f. Do you remember the **campaigns** during program implementation? Did you take part in them? Which events, materials or topics do you remember the most (e.g. leaflets, Facebook or Instagram page, posters, T-shirts)?
- g. What did you like the most?

- h. With all that you learned or did during campaigns, did anything change for you regarding:
 - Ideas of what it means to be a young man in this community, school, family;
 - Violence prevention;
 - Sexual and reproductive health;
 - Alcohol and drug abuse, and
 - Prevention of sexual violence relating to young women.
- i. Did participation in the campaigns affect any of your knowledge, skills, confidence, attitudes, behaviors? If so, in which spheres the most?
- j. Did you take part in the **BMC**?
- k. What did you like the most, related to the BMC?
- l. With all that you learned or did during BMC activities, did anything change for you regarding:
 - Ideas of what it means to be a young man in this community, school, family;
 - Violence prevention;
 - Sexual and reproductive health;
 - Alcohol and drug abuse, and
 - Prevention of sexual violence relating to young women.
- m. Did participation in the BMC affect any of your knowledge, skills, confidence, attitudes, behaviors? If so, in which spheres the most?
- n. When you compare participation in workshops, campaigns and BMC, what had the most impact, according to your opinion?

What had the most impact on: knowledge, skills, confidence, attitudes, behaviors, and in which spheres/topics?

E. Effects on Gender Roles and Norms

I would like to learn more about your perceptions on being a man and a woman in this community.

- a. According to your opinion, how should 'a real man' or 'a real woman' look like? How do you feel about desirable characteristics and social roles of men and women?
- b. How did you feel about those things when you were in high school?
- c. Did the program impact your: *knowledge, attitudes and behaviors on this topic*?
- d. What contributed the most to your change in attitudes?
- e. Did other factors also impacted, not only the program?

F. Effects on violence

- a. What falls under violence?
- b. Are there situations when violence is necessary? Give an example.
- c. Did the program influence your attitudes and behaviors towards: peer violence, gender based violence? If yes, in what way? Give an example.
- d. Have you ever felt like you might hit a young woman? What happened?
- e. Did and how the program influenced the way you react in violent situations (e.g. preventing violent and conflict situations; proving 'man's honor' through violence, etc.)? Did you gain certain non-violent conflict prevention skills through the program? To what extent do you feel *confident* to prevent violent behavior?

G. Effects on sexual reproductive health

- a. Can you name a few sexually transmitted infections, and a few contraceptives?
- b. What is your *knowledge* about contraceptives?
- c. What is your *attitudes* and relation to contraceptives?
- d. How often do you go to a doctor to check your sexually reproductive health (circle)?
- e. Did the program influence your attitudes and behavior related to sexual and reproductive health?

H. Alcohol and drug use

- a. What is your attitude on use of alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substances?
- b. How did you feel about those things when you were in high school?
- c. Did the program influence your: *knowledge, attitudes and behaviors on this topic*?
- d. What contributed the most to your change in attitudes?
- e. Did other factors also impacted, not only the program?

I. Effects on sexual violence

- a. What falls under sexual violence? According to your assessment, who are culprits for sexual violence?
- b. Did the program influence your *attitudes and behavior* towards sexual violence?
- c. Have you been in a situation to witness sexual violence in your surrounding? How did you react?
- d. To what extent do you feel *confident* and ready to prevent possible sexual violent behavior towards you by your partner with whom you are in an intimate relationship?

J. Final questions

How much did you like the following aspects of the work and what did you like the most?

- a. Workshops;
- b. Activities in the community;
- c. Way and method of work with the youth;
- d. Communication and socializing during the project;
- e. Work of the moderators;
- f. Project as a whole.

What would you be your suggestion on how to further develop this program in the future?

Wrap-Up Question: Would you like to add anything to what you have shared with me today? Do you have any questions?

Closing: Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today and sharing this information. As I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, everything you have shared is confidential. The information you have shared will help us to understand the experiences and needs of young men and women like yourself, so that schools and programs can have better ideas about what they can do to assist other young men like you. If you have any questions, please call or contact us using the information provided on the consent form.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

A. Interview Set-Up:

Greeting/name; individual affiliation; purpose; informed consent.

B. Introduction

Interviews will be realized with different interest parties (representatives of schools' staff - directors, pedagogues and teachers; parents; community members, etc.). The purpose of this interview is to ask you about your perspectives what are the changes which happened related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in key program areas: (1) gender attitudes; (2) violence prevention; (3) sexual and reproductive health; (4) alcohol and drug abuse and (5) prevention of sexual violence, as a result of direct CARE and partners' engagement. The interview should last about an hour.

The information that you tell me will remain confidential. I will never use your name in any report. If I use an exact quote from you, you will not be identified in any way. If you don't mind, I'd like to tape record the interview. That way I'll know that I accurately recorded what you said. Do you agree to allow me to tape record the interview?

Some of the questions I'll ask are about personal feelings and private aspects of your life. You are not obligated to answer any question that you don't feel like answering. If you want to skip over a question, just tell me. If you want to stop at any time, just tell me.

Do you have any questions before we start? (Start the interview)

C. Background Information

Before we begin, I would like to get some background information.

- a. How old are you? Where are you from? What is your relationship with Program Y (parent, teacher, professional associate, etc.)
- b. What are some of the challenges young people face in their life? In schools, general community, in their homes?
 - Gender relations;
 - Peer pressure and violence;
 - Alcohol and drug use;
 - Relationships with young (wo)men;
 - Sexual and reproductive health of young male students;
 - Other challenges.
- c. Over the past years, there has been a project called YMI in this place/school. Have you noticed any project activities? Which ones? Have you, yourself, participated in any YMI activities or events? Which ones?
- d. What do you think of these activities? What do you like the most? Why? What do you like the least? Why?
- e. Do you think the program has made any difference in the overall (school) environment? Why? Why not? In your opinion, which activities were the most important and had the greatest impact?
- f. Do you think the program has made any difference in the young people who participated in the program? Why or why not?
- g. Did you saw some changes related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in area of gender attitudes?
- h. Did you saw some changes related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in area of violence prevention?
- i. Did you saw some changes related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in area of sexual and reproductive health?
- j. Did you saw some changes related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in area of alcohol and drug abuse?
- k. Did you saw some changes related to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of young people in area of prevention of sexual violence?

- l. Has the program made any difference in yourself or other teachers/parents...? Has this changed anything in how you think of young men and women?
- m. If the program was to continue next year, would you support this? Why or why not? What would you change or improve?
- n. What do you think about the idea of such programs becoming part of regular education, covered by state laws and strategies? If you support it, how would you include them in the curriculum and how would you implement them?

Annex B

Table 1. | Description of the sample in interviews and focus groups

Group	Name	Sex	Method	Total number of participants	Location
Project & partner current and former staff	CARE and local CSO staff	M (3), F (2)	Focus group	5	Western Balkans
Young people	BMC generation 2017-2020	M (1), F (4)	Focus group	5	Albania
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016 and 2017-2020	M (3), F (5)	Focus group	8	BiH/RS
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016	M (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	BiH/RS
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016 and 2017-2020	M (1), F (2)	Focus group	3	BiH/FBiH
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016 and 2017-2020	M (3), F (1)	Focus group	4	Kosovo*
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016	M (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	Croatia
Young people	BMC generation 2013-2016 and 2017-2020	M (2)	Focus group	2	Serbia
Stakeholders	University professor	F (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	Albania
Stakeholders	School director	F (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	Albania
Stakeholders	School director/school pedagogue	F (2)	Semi-structured interview	2	BiH
Stakeholders	School pedagogue/Ministry representative from BPC	F (2)	Semi-structured interview	2	BiH
Stakeholders	School director/school pedagogue	F (2)	Semi-structured interview	2	Croatia
Stakeholders	Ministry representative/school pedagogue	F (2)	Semi-structured interview	2	Serbia
Stakeholders	School director	M (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	Kosovo*
Stakeholders	School pedagogue	M (1)	Semi-structured interview	1	Kosovo*
Total number		M (17), F (24)		41	

Table 2. | Impact study matrix

Program aspects	Impact and change		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Program in general			X
Gender attitudes			X
Violence prevention			X
Sexual and reproductive health			X
Alcohol and drug abuse		X	
Prevention of sexual violence		X	
Influence of the workshops			X
Influence of the campaign			X
Influence of the BMC			X
Future of the program			X

Research


Impact Study Research

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